

Out of The Ashes of a Hungry Fire by Jamjamsfics

Series: the "Out of The Ashes of a Hungry Fire" universe [1]

Category: IT (Movies - Muschietti), IT - Stephen King

Genre: Angst with a Happy Ending, Bisexual Richie Tozier, Eddie Kaspbrak Loves Richie Tozier, Endgame Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier, Gay Disaster Eddie Kaspbrak, Gay Eddie Kaspbrak, Gay Panic, Homophobia, Homophobic Language, Hurt Richie Tozier, Hurt/Comfort, Implied/Referenced Self-Harm, Internalized Homophobia, Losers Club (IT) Friendship, M/M, Minor Bill Denbrough/St Stanley Uris, Minor Character Death, POV Eddie Kaspbrak, POV Richie Tozier, Patrick Hockstetter is His Own Warning, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder - PTSD, Puberty, Rape Recovery, Recreational Drug Use, References to Depression, Richie Tozier & Stanley Uris Are Best Friends, Richie Tozier Loves Eddie Kaspbrak, Slow Burn, Soft Eddie Kaspbrak, Stanley Uris is a Good Friend, Suicidal Thoughts, Underage Rape/Non-con, after killing it, i guess au where patrick doesn't die, implied in context with beverly, or at least implied bisexual, phychopath patrick, richie tozier protection squad, supportive friends

Language: English

Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Henry Bowers's Gang (IT), Maggie Tozier, Mike Hanlon, Patrick Hockstetter, Richie Tozier, Sonia Kaspbrak, Stanley Uris, Wentworth Tozier

Relationships: Eddie Kaspbrak & Richie Tozier, Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier, Patrick Hockstetter/Richie Tozier

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Summary:

Richie always hated how Patrick looked at him. He never looked at the other losers the same way. Always with a....predatory smile,

Licking his lips. Sometimes it seemed like his eyes drift south. It made him wildly uncomfortable, as it would really anyone. But it didn't seem like the others knew. They didn't seem to notice the hunger in the older teen's eyes when they laid on Richie, But Richie did. How could he not? Those eyes on him stung like a burning flame.

Richie finds himself walking home alone from the clubhouse and unable to get away when Patrick Hocksetter sets out to claim what he deems as his.

this story follows Richie's recovery from a brutal assault with the help of his friends, as well as following Eddie through a tragedy of his own, linked to Richie's case. Eddie and Richie seem to be getting a lot closer in their time of need.

1. the king of draw fours

Author's Note:

- Inspired by [Twisted Little Games](#) by [DarkShadows_EvilMind](#).

PLEASE head the warnings. chapter two will be mostly a big red flag for anyone triggered with these types of things. i will have a warning break (~~~) in the beginning of the triggering content and at the end so that anyone still wanting to read the fic can skip those parts. ending notes will have a none triggering recap of the important bits.

that being said, first chapter is all fun, so no warnings needed here!

DISCLAIMER: i do NOT condone the content in this fic. this fic is NOT intended to be a fetish fic.

this fic is very loosely inspired by the fic [Twisted Little Games](#) by [DarkShadows_EvilMind](#)

Three days

Three days after IT had been pushed back into its slumber.

Everything seemed so.....normal. As if nothing had happened, as if dozens of kids didn't go missing. Why did people even live here anymore? Why wouldn't they all just up and abandon this shitty town? After everything that had happened, after all the bodiless funerals this town had endured, after all the god damned rotting corpses washed out of the sewers two days after it stopped, you would think that would be enough to have at least a few dozen families leave town in fear of their kids being next, right? That would be wrong. They had false hope. They convicted the wrong psychopath and thought they were forever free from the pain IT would force them to endure in tens of years to come.

“crazed serial kidnapper, Henry Bowers, found.” Richie Tozier read

aloud the newspaper article. The kids sat in a circle, crisscrossed, in their underground hideout. Richie sighed, adjusting his glasses before continuing with the article. "Police say Henry Bowers is the prime suspect in the serial kidnapping case after finding his father, a fellow officer, dead in his home. Bowers wandered back onto his property that night while police were investigating the crime, mumbling about needing to 'kill them all'. Police later found he was covered in sewer water, tying Bowers to the kidnapping case, as the bodies of the missing kids were found washed up near the sewer entrance." grunting, Richie crumbled the paper and tossed it. "what a load of hog shit!"

"well....i guess we can look at it this way, at least Henry won't bother us anymore." Beverly said with a side smile toward Richie before standing up and lighting a cigarette.

Richie sighed, crossing his arms over his chest. As much as he loved her smile, he also hated it. "yeah, well.....where's our credit? We're the ones who took down that fuckin clown, the police didn't do *shit*. We risked our fucking *lives* for this stupid ass town, but nothing will change! We'll go back to school and still be the loser outcasts. And on top of that, now Henry's gang will be run by Patrick, and quite frankly, my dear, I'm not sure that's any better."

Beverly gave a meek shrug, taking a drag of her smoke.

".....he's....he's got a point." Eddie spoke up after a few seconds of silence. He was looking down, toward the dirt covered floor that he was still currently sitting on. He bit his lip before continuing. "I mean....I don't really care about recognition," Richie scoffed. Eddie shot him a slight glare before looking back to Bev and the others, who all stood up at this point. ".....but bowers....being gone....while it's one less asshole to deal with, we still have the rest of them. And I mean.....Henry was crazy....but he was crazy because of IT's influence over him.... but Patrick?" he shook his head, looking away. "Patrick is just....crazy...all on his own..."

No one on this earth could argue there. Patrick Hocksetter, indeed, was pretty fucked in the head, and IT had nothing to do with it. You never want to be caught alone with him, especially not if you're on his shit list. And they were all high on that list.

Richie always hated how Patrick looked at him. He never looked at the other losers the same way. Always with a....predatory smile, Licking his lips. Sometimes it seemed like his eyes drift south. It made him wildly uncomfortable, as it would really anyone. But it didn't seem like the others knew. They didn't seem to notice the hunger in the older teen's eyes when they laid on Richie, But Richie did. How could he not? Those eyes on him stung like a burning flame.

He shivered at the thought, quick to change the subject to avoid thinking too hard about the burning, unsettling stares, but Ben beat him to it. Thank fucking god for Ben.

"we shouldn't think about this right now. Let's....play some cards." he smiled wide, pulling a pack of cards out of his back pocket. "I've got Uno!"

"oh shit, Uno!" Stanley was surprisingly excited for this and made his way over from where he sat on the hammock.

This prompted a slight grin on Richie's lips, shooting Ben a thank you look, though Ben wouldn't completely understand how grateful he was for that game of Uno. "Uno you say? Well it looks like we're in for a wild night!"

"i-I'm gonna kick all y-you're a-asses." Bill stuttered out with a grin, making his way back to the group as well. The rest of the gang huddled back into their crisscrossed circle on the ground, Mike being handed the cards to shuffle since he was the only one good enough to not make a mess.

"like to see you try! I'm the Uno fuckin champ!" Richie exclaimed, pounding a fist on his chest. Eddie shot him a scrunched nose look of disbelief.

"yeah right, since when?"

"since I beat your mom in a game of strip Uno last night!" he raised his arm for a high five, looking around the room, though no one was biting, as per usual. Eddie shook his head and rolled his eyes, and Stanley gave him a 'done with your shit' look.

"how the hell do you even play strip Uno?"

"easy. You lose enough times until you get to see those big, honkin-" Richie cupped the air in front of his chest, as if to grab invisible breasts, but was cut off by Mike who plopped himself down and started to deal the cards.

"ok stop your bickering and take your damned cards" he grinned, placing the deck in the middle and turning over the first card. It was a blue 5. and thus, the game began.

They Uno'ed into the evening, playing about five games, all of which ended with some sort of argument. Eddie ended up quitting in game three after getting twenty plus cards from Richie's tirade of draw four's. How in the hell did he have so many draw four's?! Richie's evil laughter echoed in his mind as he sulked on the hammock and watched his friends fight over Bill's quick win.

Richie announced his departure from the game as the friends bickered, claiming, "the king of draw fours must retire to the hammock throne!" and hopped on over to plop himself in next to Eddie. "scooch over, princess, the king has arrived!"

Eddie grunted, reluctantly moving so Richie could squeeze in. "dammit, Rich, get your ass off of my foot!"

"why don't you get your foot outta my ass?" he grabbed Eddie's foot that he had sat on, pulling it out from under him. "I aint trying to have a colonoscopy, doctor K. I'm saving that for your mom's fist."

Eddie's eyebrow raised. Richie didn't think that your mom joke through. ".....did you just admit that you want to get fisted?"

Richie processed this and made a disgusted face. ".....okay, shut up that's not what I meant." he sat up a bit, checking the watch on his wrist.

"oh yeah, sure it's not-"

"ah fuck, I gotta bounce, guys!" he hopped up from the hammock so fast it almost made Eddie topple over.

“Jesus, motherfucker-!” he hollered, gripping on the edge of the hammock for dear life as it threatened to pour him onto the floor.

“too easy.” Richie shook his head as he began to pack up his backpack.

“where do you need to go to so fast?” Bev said, leaning back against a support beam.

“eye doctor’s appointment. Mom would end my whole career if I came home late.”

“what does that even *mean* !?” Eddie, still annoyed by the almost face plant into dirt, shouted.

Richie shrugged at the end of the ladder. “i dunno. Later, nerds!” he started to climb.

Ben stood up. “wait, shouldn’t....shouldn’t someone walk you home? What if Bowers-I mean Patrick’s gang-”

Patrick.

That name brought unwanted memories to the front of his mind. He hated those burning eyes. But he wasn’t a fucking baby. “no way, it’s not even dark out yet, I’ll be fine.” he started to climb. “besides, Patrick’s gang’s normally in the junkyard at this time.”

“well y-you be s-s-safe anyway....r-rich.”

“will do, Billy, good night!” and with that send off, he closed the hatch and made his way out of the woods, toward the kissing bridge. A short and sweet walk back home from the hideout. It was 3 pm, no cars on the road, a fine time to trek home. They didn’t normally take their bikes to the hideout in fear the transportation would give away their spot to unwanted visitors. It was the one place they could truly get away from the world, and they wanted to keep it that way.

Maybe, in hindsight, not bringing their bikes was a bad idea.

Stomp!

Richie jumped down from the grass ledge onto the pavement of the covered kissing bridge road. Halfway home, just a few more hops and skips and he'll be in town where he can grab his bike from the bike rack and ride the rest of the way. He had some time to spare, actually. Which is why he chose to take his time and stop by the carving in the railing.

R + E

He sat down on his knees in front of the letters, fingers trailing over the E with a sad expression. E stood for Eddie. Eddie Kaspbrak. The boy he bickered with and poked fun at day in and day out. Truth is, he was utterly enamored when it came to the boy.

The *boy*.

His best friend, Eddie fucking Kaspbrak, a *boy* .

He was in love with a boy.

He hated how his heart retched when he thought about this fact. When he thought about Eddie in general. When he looked at Eddie. He hated being a fucking queer. It's not that he had anything wrong with homosexuals, It's just that those types of people would be burned at the stake in a town like this. There was internalized homophobia etched into his mind, but that kind of self-hatred was something he had desperately been trying to stop, and carving the initials of himself and his crush was the first step. The first step that he took almost two months ago, and he has yet to take the second step. Or even think of what that step would be, for that matter. He was stuck In a loop of re carving the same letters in hopes that would spark some inspiration to take the next step. It was a wonder the wood hadn't split yet.

Rooting through his backpack, he took out his switch blade and began his re carving ritual, tracing the knife along the letters. He was half way done with the R when he heard footsteps behind him and froze.

He could feel them.

The burning, hungry eyes pierced through his skull.

“what the fuck are you doing, flamer?”

2. hungry eyes

Summary for the Chapter:

this chapter is mostly a trigger warning. look for the (~~~~~) in the beginning and end of the triggering parts if you would rather skip it. there will be a none triggering recap of the important parts in the end notes.

triggering stuff includes rape, sexual assault, assault in general, and underaged. if you think you can deal with that, feel free to read the full chapter!

‘this is it,’ Richie thought, ‘this is the end.’ as Patrick Hocksetter stalked over to him, he felt his body lock into place against the railing, his breath hitching in his chest. His hands shook as he stared like a helpless deer in the headlights of an oncoming train. Those god damned burning eyes. He hated them so much. They trailed over his body, lingering for far too long on certain parts. He licked his lips in that sick, perverted way, his body now looming a bit too close for comfort.

You always think, in these situations, you’d run away. Or you’d kick, scream, punch, do anything you can do to prevent the events you know would transpire if you did nothing, but you never truly know how you’d react until you’re in that situation. Richie, for one, screamed internally at himself to move, but his body didn’t obey. He couldn’t bring himself to even lift a finger off of the wooden railing behind him.

“I said.....what the fuck are you doing....” he leaned in close to Richie’s ear, whispering hotly. “...flamer.” Richie shivered, prompting a chuckle from the older teen as he pulled his head away, licking his lips one more time. Before Richie could stammer out a response, Patrick grabbed him by the neck, moving him out of the way to get a better look at the carving, though didn’t let go of his neck. “R and E, huh?” a wide grin grew on his face as he looked over toward the struggling boy in his grasp. “doesn’t one of your loser friends name start with an E? What was it.....Eddie, right~? You got a fuckin’

boner for the clean freak, little faggot?"

Richie grunted, trying to pull Patrick's hand off of his throat, but it only made him grip tighter. "g....et off....m...me..." he choked out under the pressure of the grip, feeling any second, he'd lose all source of oxygen, or that his neck would snap, or both.

(I'm going to play it safe and put the trigger break here, so proceed with cation!)

~~~~~

Patrick didn't like that answer, slamming Richie into the railing, prompting a struggled gasp. "that doesn't answer my *question* ." he grabbed the switch blade that Richie had been using previously off the ground, and Richie's eyes went wide as it was pointed toward his face. " i know your secret. You're a queer bitch. You tried to fuck Henry's cousin, you want to fuck your friend....and now ....." his grin widened, dragging the flat of the blade down his cheek. "I'm gonna fuck you ."

Richie's heart sank. No, this was not happening. He could not lose his virginity to *Patrick* , of all people. Not today. Not like this. Not ever. He kicked and pushed at Patrick, trying desperately to get him off, but Patrick retaliated, and stabbed his blade into Richie's upper arm. Richie cried out, still struggled with the hand firmly around his neck. He didn't have much time to process the pain before the blade was yanked out and he was forced onto his feet. He was turned around to face the rails, the blade now pointed toward his back and hand still gripping his neck. "walk, or I'll stab you even worse."

Reluctantly, Richie complied, stepping over the railing. Patrick steered him in the direction of the underside of the bridge where there was a small spot of dirt and rocks at the river's edge.

Patrick tossed Richie onto the rocks, the smaller one gasping and gaging for air. "don't even think about running, twerp. You know I'll catch you. And when I do....I won't let you leave alive. Now...." he gave Richie's ribs a swift kick. "get up." Richie choked and recoiled,

and when he didn't immediately obey, he was kicked again, harder this time. That one hurt way worse. He swore he felt a rib or two break. "I said get the FUCK UP!" again, Richie couldn't obey fast enough, and Patrick grabbed him by the shoulders of his over shirt and tossed him hard into the concrete foot of the bridge. His skull slammed, causing him to black out for a second. When his vision came back, Patrick was forcing him onto his feet.

"when I say get up, you *get up* , you got it!?"

"yes....yes, sir...." Richie slurred out, head still spinning from the mild concussion, trying hard to focus on the boy in front of him.

"good. Now...take your clothes off." Patrick grinned, backing up slightly to get a better view of the show.

"...that's pretty....fuckin' gay, dude...." Richie attempted a still slurred comeback, trying to distract the boy from wanting a strip tease, but that only made him angrier. Bad idea.

He pulled out the blade once again, threatening him with it. "I said strip *now* , faggot!!"

Richie's breath hitched in his chest as realization of what's to come struck him. As he slowly took his clothes off, he thought about the easiest way to escape without dying. There wasn't any. Patrick had long legs, he'd surely out run him. And even if he didn't, even if he managed to escape, he still lived in the same small town. He'd just finish the job sometime else. Or do even worse. Whatever worse would be.

Even looking away, Richie could feel the hungry eyes on his skin. Burning through his now bare flesh. He wrapped his arms around his middle, shivering as the breeze blew by. It felt wrong being naked outside. It felt even worse knowing where Patrick's eyes were.

"put this back on." Patrick thrust Richie's Hawaiian over shirt back at him after a brief moment of silence, startling him into recoiling out of habit. Once he realized what was happening, he shot Patrick a confused look. "you god damned stupid? I said put it back on!"

He....wanted him to *put on* clothes? Richie didn't argue with that. He just grabbed the shirt and put it back on. Patrick nodded, biting his lips as he scanned his eyes all over the younger boy's body. "yeah.... yeah, that's it... now you're a sexy little whore." he chuckled heavily before his eyes trailed up to his face and his expression went cold. ".....but those glasses...." he stepped closer, Richie stepping back out of pure instinct. With each step forward, he stepped back, and with each step back, Patrick's grin grew wider and more sinister. They played this little game until Richie's back hit the concrete bridge again. Patrick stepped as close as he could get without being pressed against him. It felt like ages before he spoke. "they make you look fucking ugly." he yanked the glasses off his face, tossing them as far as he could throw them, into the river.

"fuck!!" Richie, out of pure instinct, pushed past Hocksetter, attempting to run for his glasses, which was the biggest mistake he's made. Patrick grabbed him by the collar of the blue Hawaiian shirt and tossed him into the pavement with a thud, knocking the air out of his lungs as his spine slammed into a sharp rock. He gasped as the pain shot through his back. It hurt so fucking bad. He trembled, pulling the rock from behind him before he was forced onto his knees without even a moment to recover. He breathed staggered and coughed, shaking from more than just the cold air. He closed his eyes and tried to collect himself, though was cut short when he heard the zip of the other's pants.

His eyes darted open, heart stopping as he shot his head up to meet Hocksetter's already hard dick inches from his face. "open wide, pretty boy~"

"sh-sh-shi—mmm!!" he didn't have time to prepare before he had a mouth full of hocksetter dick. His eyes glued shut and his nails dug into his legs as he felt the appendage sink down his throat. It fucking *hurt* . He gagged, gripping tighter onto his legs, trying desperately not to vomit all over the other's dick. That seriously would not go well for him.

The thrusting was even worse. Patrick held onto Richie's head, holding it still as he slammed in and out of the boy's throat, grunting and mumbling "oh yes..", "that's it...", and "you're my little whore...." he said that one...a lot.

tears started to stream down Richie's face as the pain became too much to handle. His throat was on fire. He felt sick, and it was starting to get hard as hell to keep from--

The moment Patrick pulled out of his mouth, Richie turned, hands planted into the dirt, and vomited violently twice. He sobbed, groaning from the pain in his throat both from the punishment and upchuck.

Patrick made a disgusted noise. "you're lucky that didn't turn me off. Now get up and clean your mouth out."

"fuck you, you....sick....son of a bitch...." Richie sputtered, turning his head to glare up at Patrick who looked at him as if he had five heads.

"you what, motherfucker?" he grinned "you wanna say that again?"

Richie, realizing he fucked up hardcore, shook his head.

"yeah, that's what I thought. Now *clean your fucking mouth out !*" he gave him a swift kick in the ass, launching his upper body into the river water, face first.

Richie complied as fast as he could, not wanting to be kicked anymore, taking a hand full of nasty water and swishing it in his mouth before spitting it back into the river. Richie attempted to get himself up off the ground, but was once again grabbed by his shirt and tossed into the rocks. This time, several sharp rocks jabbed into his spine and ribs. he was very sure this time he felt a few cracks.

The rocks hurt like hell, but that pain would soon be replaced with the pain of a knife slicing into his lower stomach. "ahhh! Ffffuck!!" Richie gasped, looking down. Patrick was sitting on his legs to pin them down as he carved a P into his flesh. "w-w-what the fuck--"

"hold fucking still!" Patrick pointed the blade of the knife toward Richie's face. "if you try anything, this knife is going straight into your dick, you got that!?" Richie didn't hesitate to nod quickly. His head flung back, practically giving himself another concussion as the blade painstakingly started to etch out the rest of the letters. He

thought, with the P, he'd just be writing Patrick, but it seemed to go on forever. The pain was unimaginable and Richie sobbed, biting down hard onto his own arm to stop himself from gritting his teeth. It felt like ages before he finished, grinning down to behold his work.

The carving read 'property of Patrick'. He also carved 'little whore' into his left pelvis.

"there... now you're mine...." he grinned wide, reaching up to take a handful of Richie's hair. "little Eddie can't have you. You're unclean~. A little gross fucking *whore* !" he pushed Richie's legs up into his chest and, without any warning, forced his way inside. It was easier to push all the way in when his dick was still coated in Richie's saliva, but even with this layer of lubricant, it still felt like hell.

Richie's back arched, attempting to recoil away, his body wanting so badly to reject the forceful thrusts. He tried fighting back, pushing, hitting, anything to get the fuck away from this situation. The burning in his throat, the pain of his cracked ribs and spine, and the sting of the carved words in his skin seemed to all but disappear as soon as the thrusting began.

He thought his first time would be with Eddie. Or at least with someone he liked, someone he *wanted* to be with. Not like this. Never like this. And not with this person, of all people.

His fighting stopped as his arms were pinned down. He was helpless. He had to just lay back and endure it. He tried desperately to find a memory and cling to it as tight as he could. Something to get his mind to drift to a better time and place.

~~~~~  
(momentary break from triggering shit for a cute little memory!)

Splash!

Eddie laughed, splashing Richie as they floated in the water. A splash

fight broke out, the two boys flinging Tidalwave after Tidalwave toward each other. Eddie jumped up, tackling the larger boy, pushing him under the water just enough to keep his face above the surface. He held onto his shoulders, practically sitting on top of him to keep him submerged. “say uncle and I’ll let you go, Rich!”

Eddie had no idea how hard his heart was pounding. Eddie’s face hovering over his own. Eddie’s body pressed up against his. Eddie’s hands on his shoulders. He didn’t give a fuck if it meant staying mostly submerged forever. He wanted to cherish this moment of closeness.

But he knew the more he stalled; the closer Eddie would be to knowing he was staring. “Eddie, you’re too fat, I can’t breathe!” Richie laughed out loud, this outburst causing Eddie to push him under all the way.

“you asked for it! Submerge, Trashmouth!” Eddie’s adorable evil laughter rung out and the other guys joined in to the splash fight that ensued after Richie resurfaced.

~~~~~

This moment.... before the Nebolt house, before It, before their fight for their lives....before this very moment.... when they were all still just kids, splashing around in dirty water and enjoying what little summer they’d be able to enjoy. This moment was one he cherished. Spashing around with Eddie, finding the turtle, seeing Beverly in her underwear and being confused as all hell about his emotions. He’d replay this memory a million times over if it meant not being here in this moment, feeling the increasing pain in his rectum.

But that would all but stop when he felt the slither of a hot, wet tongue snake into his mouthy. He came back to reality as Patrick started to assault his mouth with his tongue. The pain shot right back like a bullet, reminding him of where he currently was. “mm! Fff...fmm mmmf....”



Patrick pulled his tongue out just long enough to let Richie speak up. “what the fuck was that, whore?”

“aah...f-fuck, I.... hh...s-stop....fuck....fucking.... *STOP !*”

The outburst of moans and cries prompted a hearty chuckle from the teen. “oh, what was that? ‘go faster, Patrick?’ Mmmm....” he licked the side of Richie’s face heavily. “don’t mind if I do....~” he slammed in, faster and harder.

This didn’t last much longer, but to Richie, it lasted years long. Years and years of increasing pain, until he felt the hot liquid seep into his body. He coiled in, gripping at his stomach as Patrick pulled out, the emptiness making the pain that much worse. He took the moment of peace to catch his breath, turning over on his side, groaning out sobs. He wanted to be left alone. Left alone to die under the kissing bridge. He didn’t care if he died. He wanted this to be over.

But it was far from over.

“you know what we do to little whores after we fuck them senseless?” Patrick’s voice rang out, but Richie didn’t look up. He knew all too well what was coming next. “we beat them bloody.”

The first shoe collided into his stomach, Then the next into his chest. A fist came in contact with his face, then another, breaking his nose. Then another shoe to the groin, feeling a popping sensation in his balls that couldn’t have been anything good, and a stomp to his ribs sent more cracking under the pressure. he went numb. The pain was mixed, every inch of him hurt. And before he knew it, it was over. The beating, anyway.

~~~~~

He was pulled up into a sitting position and a warm beer was shoved into his hands.

“chug it!” Richie’s hazy eyes looked up to Patrick, confused, head spinning, just barely being able to comprehend anything at this point. “i don’t want you remembering *anything*, so chug the damn beer,

faggot!”

Why the fuck not? Maybe this would take some of the pain away. Or make him drunk enough to black out. Why would he argue about not remembering this? Sure, remembering would mean he could take this shit to court and convict the bastard, but the carving in his stomach would be enough to do that all on its own. Patrick might be crazy, but he’s not that smart.

Patrick ended up making him chug five beers before taking off back into the woods, taking Richie’s clothes with him.

Richie was left limp on the ground, nothing but his blue Hawaiian shirt to cover his trembling body. His head was spinning, and he couldn’t tell if it was from the pain or the beer. He tried to stand, but his cracked ribs and spine told him otherwise. He crawled, dragging himself from under the bridge and up to the railing, managing to fling his upper body over, dangling on the wooden beam. Looking over, he smiled, spotting the R + E before blacking out, body going limp on the side of the bridge.

As he faded from consciousness, he could hear a voice call out, as if it were underwater, or in a hallow tunnel and far, far away.

It was Eddie’s voice.

“Richie!!? Holly shit!!”

Nothing but darkness.

Notes for the Chapter:

none triggering recap:

richie was stabbed in the upper arm

some of his ribs were broken, and a fractured spine

patrick carved "property of Patrick" into his lower stomach and "little whore" into his left pelvis

Patrick beat him up after, which is where he broke his ribs, but he also broke his nose and might have ruptured a testicle

3. i beleive in yesterday

Summary for the Chapter:

the losers find Richie and do what they can to get help and keep him conscious.

this is a kind of short chapter, but I wanted to get something done and up today. next chapter would probably be more eddie pov for at least the first bits.

song lyrics are from Yesterday by the Beatles

Yesterday.

“Richie!?”, Eddie screamed.

“oh my god!”, Beverly gasped.

“g-guys, help m-me get him u-u-up!”, Bill sputtered out.

“holy shit, holy fucking *SHIT!!*”, Stan spoke with a crack in his voice.

All my troubles seemed so far away.

He could hear his friend’s voices yell passed the darkness, but his eye lids fell too heavily. He couldn’t open them. Not right now, anyway. Everything was under water. Sinking further down. The echos of his friend’s voices got more and more distant as he slipped closer and closer to unconsciousness. It felt the way it feels to finally drift slowly off to sleep in a soft, warm bed after being forced to stay awake for 24 Stright hours. The booze numbed the pain, for the most part. He just wanted to sleep. To drift further and further down into the depths of the ocean.

That was, until hands grabbed him, dragging him back. Literal hands. Bill and mike lifted Richie up, B i ll behind, supporting his legs, and Mike in front, hoisting him over the railing. Eddie stood beside on the road side of the rails, arms out to help catch Richie.

Now it seems as though they’re here to stay.

“ careful!” Beverly yelled, waving her hands.

“he’s...he’s got a lot of bruises, man....” Mike spoke soft, being gentle to not harm the bruises.

Oh, I believe

As they helped the limp, semi-conscious boy over the railing, his body fell into Eddie’s arms, the smaller boy gently holding onto him as he moved to sit them both on the ground, backs against the wood, Richie leaning into Eddie. “hey, hey, Rich, Richie, stay with us, buddy.” Eddie spoke low, tone showing obvious distress and worry, but he tried to stay calm, his fingers gently carding into curled locks.

In yesterday.

Bill paced the road, the rest of them staring on in shock. Beverly cupped her hands over her mouth, trying hard not to cry. “oh, Rich, what happened....? ”

“ wh -what the f-f- ffff uck , man, he l-l-left a h-half hour ago, what the h-hell happened!?”

“holy shit...” Eddie softly spoke.

“he must’ve got jumped! Or hit by a car!” Mike threw out some theories.

“guys?” Eddie tried to speak up over the yelling.

“hit by a car!? Mike, he’s fucking *naked* !” Stanly wildly gestured to Richie.

“ i don’t know, man, I’m freaking out!”

“guys, for real-” E ddie tried again.

“we need to find his cloth e s, they should be somewhere around here, right!?” Ben looked around frantically.

“right, c-c loths, find his c-c-cloth es!” Bill joined in the search.

“GUYS!!”

“what!?” the four bickering boys simultaneously turned to Eddie and spoke.

suddenly

Eddie slowly and gently pulled back the over shirt from his stomach, revealing the carved wards. His stomach and lower half was covered in dry and still running blood. The cuts were pretty deep. They wouldn't fully heal anytime soon.

The gang walked over toward the two on the ground, faces scrunching in disgust and horror. “p-p-property of p-p-p-p-p--”

--Patrick.” Stan gulped. “fuck, what the fuck does th-that mean?”

“ th -that's not all, guys... look at his hip bone.” Eddie gestured to the words ‘little whore’. Their hearts all simultaneously sunk. They weren't stupid, they knew exactly what this meant now.

“oh my god....” Beverly cried, hands still over her mouth. “o-oh my god, Rich....”

I'm not half the man I used to be.

“ i -I'm going to get help!” Ben announced, picking up his backpack and starting to run down the road.

“ i'll go to o !” Beverly volunteered to run for help. She knew all too well what this all meant. She knew immediately once they saw Richie's limp, naked and beaten body. The carvings just solidified what she already knew.

“keep him c-conscious, Eddie! We-we'll go-go look for his cloths and g-g-glasses!”

Eddie was in even more distress now, watching over his shoulders as the others hopped the rails and ran down to the underside of the bridge. “wh-what!? How do I do that?!”

“just *talk to him* , for god's sake!” Stan yelled back as they continued

to run down the hill.

“shit...” Eddie muttered, breathing starting to pick up. He fumbled with his fanny pack, using his unoccupied hand, the other one currently clinging around Richie to keep him stable. He pulled out his inhaler and took a long breath. He knew they were placebos. He knew they didn’t actually help, medically at least, but at this point, it was nothing but a coping mechanism.

“....Eddie....?” a raspy breath came out of Richie’s mouth as he attempted to open his eyes but failed. They were just too....heavy.

There's a shadow hanging over me.

“rich?” Eddie spoke soft, sighing in relief. “oh, thank fucking god, dude, I thought you were-”

“I did everything I could to stay alive, Eds.... I did all he wanted just to stay alive...”

“ all he wanted....” Eddie didn’t have to think about that. He didn’t have to think because he had a wild guess as to what that meant, based on his state and the carvings. Eddie’s grip tightened around his shoulders, though kept them loose enough not to harm his knife wound. “thatthat fucking....” Eddie sniffed, feeling tears welling in his eyes. He shook his head, quickly whipping them away. “I’m....I’m so sorry, Richie...”

Oh, yesterday

Richie’s head turned to look up to Eddie’s face, able to slightly open his eyes for a few seconds. “are you.....crying, Eds....?”

“.... i just--”

“we f -f-f ound them!!”

Came suddenly.

Eddie’s head turned to look in the direction of the shout, which was a far-off distance and under the bridge. “you found what!?”

Bill was standing on a rock in the middle of the river, Richie's busted glasses in front of him. The rock saved them from floating down, never to be seen again, however they were worse for wear. "...his g-g-glasses!!" he shouted back, kneeling down to pick them up when Mike shouted at him from the shore.

"hey! Don't touch them, dude, they're evidence! You can't touch the evidence!"

"...r-right!" he sighed, taking a look at them without touching them. They were cracked in several places, and the frames bent. He stood back up, careful as he made his way back to shore. "wh-what...what do w-w-we do now?"

"i don't know, but..." Stan pointed to a spot of white liquid on the ground next to some blood and vomit. "I'm sure there's enough evidence here to suggest rape and assault.so we should just.....leave this to the professionals...." he turned to walk back up the hill. "when they get here, that is..."

The other two glanced down at the mess with disgust on their faces. This was a lot more than they'd ever thought they would have to deal with in their youth. Or ever, for that matter. None the less, they followed Stan back up.

"wh -what I-if he comes b-b-back....?"

Stan stopped at the midway point, turning to the others. His expression could only be described as pissed. "....if he comes back.....we'll make him fucking pay for what he's done."

The other two give each other a side glance and then back to Stan, nodding before they started to walk again.

They hopped back over the railing, Stan leaning down to look over Richie's wounds. He winced as the carvings were touched, Stan giving a mumbled apology. "he's going to need stiches.... these are deep. And still fucking bleeding..." he whipped the blood from his fingers on his jeans. "Richie? Look at me. Do you know what year it is?"

Richie, still in a haze, head spinning, making Stan look like he had

multiplied by five, gave the other boy a confused look. "...it'sfuckin 89...? Why do you askstupid questions...?" he slurred out, head falling back onto Eddie's shoulder as he closed his eyes.

Stan sighed, gently patting Richie's shoulder before standing back up. "to make sure you don't have memory loss, dip shit...."

Eddie bit his lip, looking down toward the ground as his head raced with questions and concerns. "he -he needs to get to the hospital before his wounds get infected. I said it before and I-I'll say it again, if he gets infected, you can't amputate a *waist* . And.....and if he waswasyou know....." he pauses a moment. "then....then the chances of him being 'clean' are very slim....."

Clean.

He wasn't clean.

He wasn't *clean* .

He was-

A little gross fucking whore.

His heart raced as his mind replayed those words, panic setting in as he cut the others off from their argument, pushing Eddie off of him with a yell, sending the both of them falling over. He gasped as the sudden movement brought back pains that were dormant for a while.

"shit, Rich-!" Eddie sat up, worried for his friend's sudden movements to get away from him.

"R-Richie!" the others tried to help him up, but he scurried away.

"d-don't touch me!!!"

"....rich....dude, it's okay, we're not here to hurt you-"Mike attempted.

"no! No, no, I-I'm unclean! I'm dirty, I'm filthy, I-I-I'm a g-gross fucking *whore* !" he looked to Eddie, tears in his eyes as he frantically sobbed. "you c-can't touch me, Eddie, you can't, I'm dirty, he-he said

it himself, I'm a gross whore, a dirty, disgusting--"

Sirens rang out, coming from the direction of town, getting closer and closer as they saw their two friends who went to get help ridding back toward them on their bikes. "the police and an ambulance are right behind us!" Ben stated as the two got off their bikes.

"Richie!" Beverly got off her bike, fumbling over toward him and placing a hand on his cheek. "hey.... hey, you're awake, good.... it's okay, Rich, you're going to be okay, honey, I promise." she spoke in that soft, melodic tone, her smile breaking through his panic.

She held him there, smiling into his soul, as if to heal him from the inside out, as the sirens got closer and closer before two police cars and an ambulance pulled up, and EMTs rushed out.

Eddie stood up, worry still set on his face as he watched the medics scoop Richie up and hoist him onto a gurney . Was it something he said? It had to have been. He really needed to learn to keep his mouth shut.

The cops were quick to question. Who are you to the victim? Do you know who did it? How do you know? Where were you when the incident happened?

We're his friends, Patrick fucking Hocksetter , the carving on his stomach literally says his name, we were walking back home probably, ect , ect.

Stanly started to get sick of the questions and just pointed them down the hill under the bridge. All the evidence that this was Hocksetter that they ever needed was down there. Not that his literal name being carved into Richie's flesh couldn't say just that too, but according to the police "that could just as well be someone framing him." whatever.

Eddie, however, was checked out for the most part. He had his eyes set on the ambulance. He wanted to ride with Richie, make sure he was okay, but they wouldn't let him. Now all he could do was stand at the back entrance , watching the EMTs hook Richie up to a few machines and get to work on patching him up before the doors were

shut and they were on their way back down the road.

Sighing, he walked back toward the railing where he had left his backpack. Picking it up, he noticed something out of the corner of his eye.

R + E

The R looked freshly carved.

4. For Richie

Summary for the Chapter:

in which the losers deal with some shit as Richie gets treated and ultimately come to the conclusion that Richie is very important.

also Eddie's dealing with his own shit. so much shit to deal with.

Notes for the Chapter:

this was supposed to just be mostly Eddie pov with some Richie, but I got carried away, so we got....eddie pov, Bev pov, stan pov....everyone pov, it's a pov party.

also a lot of jump cuts. only way I could make this all work, sorry.

also also, I noticed that some words in my fic is like....spaced out? like for example, the word obey from chapter 2 is spelled out like "ob e y". not sure what's happening there. might be AO3's layout screwing with it when I copy/paste. sorry if that's a bit confusing. it's not like that in the word docs, so idk man. if anyone knows what's going on and how to fix it without having to re-read and edit every spaced out word, lemme know.

a small trigger warning break, only because a tiny section deals with a rape kit exam. not super detailed, but it does explain somewhat of how one goes about a rape kit exam, so just to be safe. look for the ~~~~~ at the beginning and end of the potentially triggering bits if you want to skip it.

The R was so fresh, the wood was just carved, darker than the rest, smooth to the touch, deeper cut. Richie always carried around a switch blade in his back pack, even in school. They didn't have security, so he got away with it. Hell, he and Beverly got away with smoking in study hall when the teachers weren't there. They could get away with damned near anything.

But this R. he couldn't get over this fucking R. he remembered the very spot they found Richie, it was right next to this carving, he was right there, and R and E are their initials, and the R was fresh, and--

This couldn't have been just a coincidence, could it? His heart began to race. He felt like a complete ass. his friend was traumatized, beaten, and worse, being hoisted off to the hospital, and here he was getting all fluttery hearted and rosy cheeked over two fucking letters that could possibly mean jack shit.

Even yet, Eddie's fingers grazed over the still fresh R in the wooden railing for the hundredth time, mouth gaped like a cod fish, unable to form coherent words as the officer tapped him on the shoulders. "boy, I've been trying to get your attention for the past minute. What's your problem?"

"ah, s-sorry, sir, I-" he stood up quickly, almost falling over from the blood rushing to his head. "um, just.....m-my friend, I'm just worried about my friend...." he sputtered out, looking to his other friends who had just been interrogated behind the officer.

"right... your friend." he crossed his arms. "now, I'll ask you the same questions I asked the other kids. Where did you find your friend?"

"we....well, we were walking down the road to get back home, and he was slumped over the guard rail, so we--"

"right, slumped over the guard rail. And you're positive it was Hocksetter that did this?"

Eddie could tell the officer thought something was fishy about this entire thing, and to that, he gave the officer a scrunched browed look. "yes, of course, his *name* is *carved* into Richie's stomach--"

“and how do we know you kids didn’t gang up on your friend and framed Hocksetter?”

“wait, are.....are you fucking serious?” he laughed a bit, finding this accusation to be a joke. “wait, you *actually* think we beat up and *raped* our fucking friend and carved Patrick’s name into his *stomach*?”

“yeah, this is a fucking joke, you’re wasting your time!” Stan walked over to Eddie and the officer. “I mean really? Just take samples from the evidence and you’ll see it was all *him* !”

The officer chuckled. “I find it convenient as hell you knew exactly where to point us to the evidence, kid. And, quite frankly, no one has seen Hocksetter in a few days. Not even his parents. How's it that your friend just so happened to run into him today?”

No one has seen Hocksetter in days? Come to think of it, that’s true. Patrick has been MIA for a while. He wasn’t in school for their first week back, either. They just assumed he was skipping out. They just assumed that he and his friends were planning something to get back at the town for convicting their leader. They assumed he was lurking in the shadows, ready to strike at any moment. But for him to be missing completely.... where the fuck has he been all this time?

The officer gave the two boys a look over, grunting as he really didn’t have any evidence against them to cuff em and take them in. “you boys go on home, now. We’ll be gathering the evidence and we expect you, as witnesses, *and* suspects, to show up in court, or we’ll be forced to take legal action, you hear?” they reluctantly nodded in agreement, and the officer wandered off to join the other men in the search.

The others joined the two as they watched the officer walk down the hill.

“....he-he s-s-seriously thinks we....”

“it’s all a bunch of bullshit...”

“is it?” everyone turned to Mike, who was looking toward the ground

with his hands in his pockets. “i mean, yeah, in our perspective, we know it’s bullshit and can’t comprehend why we’d ever do what they are suggesting, but....let’s try to think about it from their perspective. Hocksetter has been missing for a few days....we’re the only people who found Richie, and we don’t have a solid alibi. It’s.....fucked up to even think about, but coming from people who don’t know us?”

The others thought on this for a moment. They’d hate to admit it, but they knew the police were only trying to cover all their grounds since they don’t really have much to go off of.

Stan scoffed, kicking up rocks as he walked back to his stuff. “whatever. Still a waste of time. Richie knows who did it, his stomach knows who did it, and the evidence under the bridge *definitely* knows who did it, so this is all just a stupid waste of time.” he grabbed his stuff off the ground. “I’m going to the hospital. Anyone else?”

They all nod wordlessly, still in thought and unable to form sentences. Still processing everything. First the fucking clown, now this. Can they ever catch a break?

The others silently walk to gather their things when they hear a car pull up and a horn beep, followed by-

“EDDIE BEAR!!”

“oh for fuck....- why is *she* here!?” Eddie groaned in exhaustion. How the hell was his mom here!?

“i’m sorry, Eddie, she saw us leave the police station, she wouldn’t let us go until we told her-” Beverly tried to explain until Sonia stomped her way out of the car and frantically over to Eddie, grabbing him by the arms.

“eddie, oh my god, are you okay!?”

“mom- mommy, it wasn’t *me* it was *richie* !” she started to check him over, moving his head, checking his arms, under his shirt, everywhere. “mommy, would you- please, just calm down-!”

“Eddie, I told you, when you’re around people who were *touched* like

your friend was, you are at serious risk of *aids!*”

“mom, I don’t have aids-”

“you don’t know that! We have to get you to the hospital!” she started to pull him back to the car.

“we were about to go to the hospital to see *Richie* !”

“no! No, you are *not* allowed to see that boy until we know you and him are both *clean* !” she pulled him harder, making him almost fall over. He grunted, turning to his friends as he was dragged to the car.

“tell-tell Rich I’m sorry! I’ll....I’ll try to find a way to see him, I promise!” he was practically shoved into the passenger seat and in seconds, Sonia drove off like a bat outta hell. The others could only look on in amazement.

Stan shook his head and started down the road. “come on, let’s just....get to the hospital.”

~~~~~

(trigger break only because this section deals with a rape kit exam. Not in excruciating detail, but enough detail to warrant a warning just in case.)

The hospital didn’t pull any stops when treating Richie. With his, albeit very slurred and drunken, consent, they performed a rape kit exam. Richie could barely stand on the large sheet of paper he was instructed to stand on. His fractured spine and broken ribs were one reason, but also, he was *really* fucking tired.

His mom got there in no time after she was called, a few doctors having to hold her back from clinging to her son. Richie could barely focus on what was happening. Any and all medical history questions were answered by mom, as Richie stood naked on the sheet of paper dripping blood and other liquids from his body parts.



“is this all really necessary?” she asked, worried about her son’s physical state. “his wounds should be treated first, right?”

“ma’am, we need to get the rape kit exam done fast, or we risk losing evidence. Besides that, your son needs surgery for some of his more severe wounds, but they’re not dire right now. During the physical part of the exam, which I am about to perform, we will patch up surface level injuries, such as the knife wounds.”

All she could do was nod, watching on as her son was then helped onto an examination table and the sheet of paper, along with his shirt, was placed into evidence bags and sent off. After treating and patching up his wounds, they got to work on collecting samples. They collected from just about any place they could. Hair, genitalia, anal cavity, mouth, ect. After the physical exam, they documented his injuries and physical state with photographs, along with taking note of his inebriated state.

~~~~~

Richie didn’t quite have a second to think before he was whisked off to surgery, where they took care of his ruptured testicle, stitched up his scars, and fixed what they could of his ribs and spine.

Richie’s friends, excluding Eddie, sat patiently in the waiting room, wordlessly staring at their feet or whatever was on the tv in the corner of the room. The room wasn’t really that packed. There were two other families and a man sleeping. The only sounds were the surprisingly quiet children playing with the toys in the toy chest.

Beverly watched them with a smile. The little girl played with a doll and the boy with a truck, though they never once made a sound. She glanced up to, presumably, the mother. “good kids...”

The woman nodded with a side smile. “blessed to have such good children, especially given the circumstances.”

“and.....if you don’t mind me asking, ma’am....who are you here to see?”

“...my father. He's....well, he's not doing too good.” she gestured to the children. “I brought the little ones to see him, but....he's still sleeping, so we're waiting here.” Beverly nodded, giving the woman her condolences for her father. The woman looked toward the others, noting the group she was with. “....and you... what is it you kids are doing here?”

“ah, well....our friend.... he-....” she paused. “well....I'm....sure you'll be hearing about it on the news soon.” of course it'd be on the news. This was a small town, stuff like this didn't happen all that often, And with the buzz about the presumed kidnapper being caught, a case like this almost immediately after would spark high interest. She'd give it about three more days.

“oh my, the news? Is it that bad?”

Beverly gave a small nod. “it is....pretty bad, ma'am.” she sighed a bit, looking to her friends as she sat up. “....but, I..... we have faith our friend will pull out of this just fine.” she elbowed Ben. “isn't that right?”

Ben, who had been dazing out in his own little world, was taken back by this elbow jab and sat up quickly. “uh...um, oh yeah.” he nodded a bit. “yeah, yeah of course, Richie's tough, he'll be fine.” he smiled.

The woman smiled, nodding. “well, I will pray for both our loved ones to recover.”

Just then, a distraught and panicked Maggie Tozier walked into the waiting room, sitting herself down across from the rest of the kids. She kept her head down, looking toward the ground. The others didn't know whether to speak up or stay quiet.

After a moment, Bill broke the silence. “...M-Mrs. Tozier-”

“you should have called me. You should have called me *immediately* after you found him. But no, how do I find out? A phone call from the hospital stating that my son was beaten and raped.”

The woman Beverly had been talking to before covered her mouth to muffle a gasp, and the once quiet waiting room was now looking on

to the group.

Bill glanced around, taking a breath before trying to speak up again. “m-m-mrs. T-Tozier, I’m s-s-sorry, we were p-p-panicking and di-did what we knew we-we had to do, we d-didn’t think-”

“didn’t think? Didn’t think calling his mother was something you had to do?”

“n-n-no ma’am, we were just-....”

“we were *scared* .” Stan stated, glaring off toward the distressed mother. “we’re kids, we found our friend barely conscious, we’re lucky some of us had the brainpower to run for help. I’m *so sorry* we didn’t think of everything.” Stan stood up. “most important thing is that he’s alive, how about we focus on that, huh?” he looked around the room, seeing that all eyes were on him, before turning toward the door. “I’m....going to take a walk.” he left the waiting room.

Stan stood at the vending machine on the second floor for what seemed like hours, but in reality, it was only several minutes, memorizing the food and drink items inside. He wasn’t here to make a purchase, he just needed to get away from the waiting room and this is where he ended up. He stared down the diet coke bottle as if in a staring competition. One in which the coke bottle would win.

“th-that c-c-coke bottle insult you or s-something?” Bill spoke up, having wandered out of the waiting room moments after Stan to flag him down. Stan didn’t move his eye contact with the soda. He didn’t speak up, either. “Stan.....”

“what, Bill? What?” he turned to Bill quickly. “do you want to give me a speech? About how we should stick together? About how I shouldn’t get so worked up? If so, then save it.”

Bill’s mouth closed as he was at a loss for what to say. Instead, he just let Stan continue.

“i’m sick of this. I’m sick of *all* of this. I thought killing It would stop bad things from happening to us, but I guess we’re cursed now, huh?

We were finally getting settled back into being kids and *this* happens. And the worst part? No one fucking *knows* everything we've been through! I have nightmares, Bill! Every night! And I can't even tell my parents what's wrong with me!" Stan started to tear up. "and now Richie...." he shook his head. "none of you have the bond Richie and I have, we tell each other everything, I mean *everything* . You don't know the *shit* he's dealing with, and now on top of all of that, he's got *this* . "he paused for a second. "we're never going to get to be kids again, Bill. At least Richie sure as hell won't."

Bill was still at a loss for words. He knew Stan and Richie were close, they've been together longer than anyone in the group. He searched for what to say, anything at all. He had no words. Instead, he chose to pull Stan into a close hug, and to Bill's surprise, Stan hugged back. Tighter and closer than he thought he would, and buried his head into Bill's shoulder as he let himself sob, his fingers gripping on tight to the back of Bill's shirt.

Moments later, and the two were back in the waiting room, though Mrs. Tozier was nowhere to be seen, replaced by Eddie, who was rubbing at a bandage on his casted arm's inner elbow. Most likely where they drew blood.

Bill gave the others a confused look and Ben spoke up, knowing the question on his mind. "Richie's out of surgery. It went well, and he's resting. They let Mrs. Tozier in, but....we have to wait until he wakes up."

Stan let out a long sigh, flopping himself back into the waiting room chair. He didn't speak, though. He just stared off toward the ground, arms crossed.

Bill smiled slightly, giving Stan a small pat on the shoulders before taking his seat as well. "tha-that shouldn't take too l-long. Rich is an ins-s-somn-niac, I-I'll give him ten minutes." he cracked a smile, trying to make a joke to lighten up the room. Something Richie would have done. Mostly, he wanted to make Stan smile.

Success. Stan cracked a slight smile, making Bill grin. The others

smiled as well, Mike giving the first soft chuckle. “ten minutes might be a bit generous, honestly.”

“that asshole’s woken me up a few dozen times at three am, throwing rocks at my window and sneaking in like a....forbidden lover or some shit.” Stan chuckled. “it’s annoying, but....honestly.....I think he gets lonely.” he nodded. “he would never admit that, though.”

Eddie spoke up after a few seconds. “....Richie....Richie comes over to my house about....twice a week, maybe more... mostly at midnight, but sometimes later. Sometimes.....he’s normal Richie, cracking jokes and shit, I have to tell him to shut up or my mom will hear, but sometimes he’s....” he shrugged lightly. “sometimes he’s quiet. Almost....sad.” he looked up to Stan and the others. “he does seem lonely...”

Eddie would never tell them how, in those nights, and even some of the normal nights, Richie would sleep in his bed, and not only sleep in his bed but end up clinging to Eddie and sleeping in his arms throughout the night. Eddie would just tell himself this was normal. There wasn’t anything weird about two friends cuddling while they sleep. He’d tell himself that to keep the butterflies at bay. He’d tell himself that because Richie surely only saw it as friendly comfort. Though after seeing the R + E, he couldn’t help but think maybe, just *maybe*, these friendly cuddles gave Richie just as many butterflies as it gave Eddie.

He must have been spacing out, because he was brought back to the world of the living by Beverly’s fingers snapping in front of his face, blinking back into reality. “earth to Eds. Hey, dude, you okay?”

“ah, um....s-sorry, uh....did I miss something?”

Bill gave a concerned grin. “I asked you how you managed to convince your mom to let you stay.”

“oh, um....I....I didn’t.” he straightened himself up in the chair. “yeah, uh, I.....told her to....um....shove it? Threw my fanny pack into the car and booked it back into the hospital.”

“holy shit, dude.” Beverly chuckled.

“oh, Richie’s gonna get a kick out of that.” Ben grinned.

“.... I hope he can manage to stay Richie...” Mike spoke, the others turning to him. He elaborated. “...trauma like this.....it changes people. It's harder for them to joke like they used to, or trust friends and family. They have vivid flashbacks, panic attacks, anger, and self-hate issues... In the military, they call it Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. There's a chance that, given what he's been through, he could come out of this less Richie than he was this morning.”

They were silent for a moment, thinking this possibility over before Beverly spoke up with a smile. “well...how about this? No matter how this experience does or doesn't change him.....” she looked around to the others. “we vow to not give up on him. Vow to....stick by his side and help him through the pain. Because no matter what...” she put her hand in front of her, faced down. “....Losers stick together.”

The boys joined in, “.....for Richie.” Stan spoke, placing his hand on top of Bev's.

“for Richie.” Ben's hand was placed on Stan's.

“f-for Richie.” and Bill's on Ben's.

“for Richie.” Mike's on Bill's.

Eddie hesitated a moment, the others looking to him expectantly, before he quivered out a sigh and placed his casted arm-hand on top of Mike's.

“....for Richie....”

Notes for the Chapter:

I hope you all like that super subtle Bill/Stanly moment. ;)

also, the losers are now known as the Richie protection squad.

sorry Richie isn't really in this one all that much, I

planned on it going differently, but I got carried away, and now we're here. next chapter for sure, Richie will get that good old comfort.

5. i wanna be forever young

Summary for the Chapter:

Eddie has some more gay panicking, there's a cute flashback, and Richie finally wakes up.

I'm really bad at summaries, I'm sorry.

Notes for the Chapter:

holy shit, 2000 + hits!? okay, im gonna gush in the endnotes a bit about this, but gees, thank you guys so much!!

anyway, I'm doing the breaks a bit differently now to help organize more. here's what each break means:

_____ (underscore) signified the beginning and end of a flashback.

----- (hyphen) signifies a skip forward in time, whether that be a long or short time

~~~~~ (tilde) still just signifies the beginning and end of potentially triggering content

i'll update each chapter to reflect this.

Bill was wrong. It took Richie more than an *entire fucking day* to wake up. He was out cold. His parents were worried, so were his friends, but the doctors insisted he was okay and that this was normal. He needs the rest. But what was normal for most really wasn't normal for Richie. Not only was Richie a cronic Insomniac, but he also suffered from night terrors, even before the whole pennywise thing. The only time he ever really slept well was when he was sleeping with someone else, preferably holding someone else, and a body pillow didn't cut it. It had to be alive, with a heartbeat and rhythmic breathing, but he would never tell his friends that. They didn't know what really kept him up at night. Stan and Eddie didn't know the real reason he'd show up at their house and insist on sleeping in their bed with them. Insist that him and Eddie cuddle. Thankfully Eddie didn't



seem to mind at all. They thought he was *lonely*. He wasn't. He was just terrified of sleeping alone.

The only people who knew about these were his parents and doctors. His parents only know because they often times would wake up to Richie screaming in his sleep. Sometimes he'd sleep walk and bang on their bedroom door or just on random walls. It was really startling and scary at first, but they got used to it after a while. It was almost a nightly thing. His parents were not aware of their son's frequent outings to his friends' houses, though. That is the one thing he kept from them.

the pennywise situation made the night terrors worse. They'd happen way more often, they were way more extreme, and they'd leave him with way less sleep than usual. The terrors more than likely would worsen even more after this.

Thankfully, during his entire day of rest, there were no terrors. Come to think of it, he didn't even remember if he dreamt at all or not. An entire 24 + hours of dark nothingness. That must be how being dead feels.

It took him a second to adjust to the waking world. It was dark, he wasn't in his room, and he could feel wires and needles all over and inside of him. He felt numb, He must have been on painkillers. His head was spinning and he felt like passing right back out, but one little sound of a hum next to him shot his eyes back open. He looked down, adjusting his blurred vision enough to see that there was someone on a chair beside his bed, their arms folded over and head in their arms on the side of the bed, presumably sleeping. Who was sleeping like that beside his bed? It wasn't his mom or dad, it was too small. It was one of his friends. He couldn't quite make it out who this was in the dark blurriness, but whoever it was, they slept in a very strange and seemingly uncomfortable position. The sound that they made gave it away that they were at least male, which only eliminated one option, though he could barely tell that their hair was straight and their skin was white, so that left three options; Bill, Ben, and Eddie.

Deciding he'd just figure this out later when it was less dark, he opted to go back to sleep. He was far too exhausted and numb to even

consider being awake any longer. Who knew that 24 + hours wouldn't leave him wired and ready to be awake that much more. It felt the same as any other sleepless night.

Richie passed back out within seconds of closing his eyes.

-----

As sun broke through the window blinds in the hospital room, Eddie grunted, eyes squinting to help keep the beams from seeping through, but it wasn't enough, and he was forced to open his eyes. He sat up slowly, back stiff as a board from sleeping in this hunched over sitting position. The chair he was in wasn't really all that comfortable, but it was really all he had at the moment. He couldn't go back home. He had slept in the waiting room the night before, those chairs weren't any more comfortable than this. Richie's mom had to leave the hospital for work, and he took over watching Richie after she left. Luckily, it was the weekend still, so the doctors didn't make him leave for school, but come night time, it took everything for him to convince them to let him stay in the room. It was different when it was his mom. She's his mom, and he's just his friend.

He didn't sleep all that well. Besides the fact that the position was not at all comfortable, he was scared to death that his mom would find where he was and drag his ass back into hell. She didn't, thankfully. Or did she even try? All she had to do was ask what room Richie Tozier was in, find it, and grab him up. It wasn't that hard. Part of him wondered if his mom decided to stop giving a shit about him. It would make sense if she did. This was the third time he's acted out and practically told her to 'fuck off'. God, he felt like a terrible son. Even so, forcing him to not see Richie through this entire ordeal was not something he was going to allow to happen. He had to be there for Richie. Sure, he had their other friends and his parents, but he felt like he had to be there personally. He didn't know why. Maybe it was the R + E on the kissing bridge, maybe it was his own feelings for Richie. He just knew he couldn't leave his side for too long.

Eddie rubbed at his eyes and glanced toward the clock in the room. It was six am. He groaned sleepily, yawning a bit and looked over toward Richie, who was, from his knowledge, still knocked out. He was asleep, but Eddie wasn't aware Richie had previously woken up

in the middle of the night. He watched Richie's steady breath, listened closely to the heart monitor's rhythmic beeps. He studied the spot of bed that was bare next to Richie. There were no wires on that side of him and enough space for someone small to squeeze into. He was pretty small, and he could make himself smaller on his side. In his hazy, sleepy state, his mind drifted back to the last time Richie had paid him a nightly visit.

=====

It was the night after defeating It. Eddie had wandered home after being gone for so long. The seven of them had attempted to bath in the quarry, but it did little for the smell of sewage which was still very clear on his skin. He knew he'd be in for it big time. Not only had he been gone for so long, but the last time he saw his mom, he about gave her a heart attack, telling her he knew his pills and inhaler were bullshit and that she can't keep him from seeing his friends because they needed him and promptly ran out of the house, only to now, hours upon hours later, show back up looking and smelling like *this*. he mentally prepared himself on the stoop of his home before entering. "....mommy?" he called out.

"EDDIE!?" he heard his mother's frantic voice call from the kitchen before her footsteps bound toward him. He closed his eyes tight as she scooped him up, hugging him so tight he thought he'd collapse a lung.

"m-mo-m, ow...." he stammered out, though let her hug him. Maybe letting her fuss over him will help with whatever's coming next.

"oh, Eddie, I was so scared! Where in the world were you!? And what's that smell!?" she placed him down, looking over him frantically. "what is this, Edward, it smells like shit- Eddie were you in the sewers?!"

"mom..... you....wouldn't believe me if I told you-"

"you could catch some horrible diseases playing around in those sewers! Not to mention how unsanitary this is! Eddie, I thought I taught you better than this!"

“...I'm sorry mommy.” Eddie was tired. He didn't want to argue. He just wanted to shower and go to bed.

She scoffed at his tone, grabbing his arm and pulling him toward the stairs. “I am giving you a bath! We're going to scrub you down thoroughly and make sure you don't have any open wounds!” open wounds. Yeah, he had plenty of those. He knew he'd be spending a few hours in the ER for sure.

-----

Eddie felt violated. As he fell backward on his bed, almost five hours after he got back home, he tried drowning out the memories of that invasive bath and ER trip with the mixtape Richie had made him for his birthday. He smiled as Alphaville's Forever Young started to play. It was one of his favorites, but after this summer, he felt it would take on a new meaning. He was scared of growing up, not because the thought of not being a kid anymore, having responsibilities, a job, a family, all that was something he wanted to avoid, but because knowing what could be potentially waiting for him in 27 years scared the hell out of him. He didn't want to *die*. He was almost certain that, if they had to face it again later on in life, he would.

Looking over the still fresh wound in his palm, he couldn't help think about what Bev said. She saw all of them. She saw all of them *back there* . He could only hope his gut feeling was wrong.

***Forever young.***

***I want to be***

***Forever young.***

***Do you really want to live forever?***

A rock hit his window and he gasped, jumping up to sit up. Another rock hit, and he sprung out of bed and over to his window, sighing deeply as he saw Richie standing in his yard, waving to him with a wide grin and a handful of rocks. Eddie rolled his eyes and gestured for him to come up.

Richie had his own special way of getting to Eddie's window. He'd

climb a tree to get over and spring onto the ledge then pry open the window. Eddie always left it a crack open so they could cut out the rock-throwing bit, but Richie still did it on occasion.

“I told you, Rich, *just come in*. If you break my window, mom’ll be pissed.”

Richie scoffed as he crawled in through the window. “you think I’d throw rocks that’d do damage? You wound me, spaghetti.”

From his tone and immediate nickname, Eddie determined it was a normal Richie night. he wasn't sure if this was a good thing. He almost would rather deal with sad Richie, at this point. At least sad Richie skipped the chitchat and went right to sleeping.

Thinking that made him feel like an ass, though. He would rather his friend be depressed so he didn’t have to deal with him? That’s pretty fucked up.

“listening to my mixtape?” Richie’s face widened in a grin as he gestured to the radio, still playing the same song.

Eddie sat down on his bed, sighing, continuing to stare at the scar on his palm. “.....yeah.”

Richie cocked a brow, finding this a bit abnormal. Usually, Eddie would say something like, ‘yeah, so what?’ or ‘shut up, Richie.’, but it seemed like it was Eddie’s turn to be in a depressed mood.

Richie opted to sit down beside his friend, watching him a moment before lifting his own hand and looking at his scar as well. It was quiet for a moment, save for the music in the background, before Richie spoke up. “.....we’ll be alright, Eds....” Eddie looked toward Richie as the other gave him a smile. “we will. I mean, we fought it once, we can do it again, right?”

“but what if.....what if we don’t make it out alive?” Eddie closed his palm, looking down. “....something.....something in my gut is telling me.....that *I* won't live through the next fight. Something's telling me.....that if we have to go back there...-” he shook his head. “.....I don’t....want to die, Rich....”

Richie sighed, scooting himself closer to Eddie, an arm placing around his waist for comfort. “....I won't let that happen, Eds.... I'm not gonna let you die.... you can mark my words, I'll make sure you make it out alive, okay?”

Eddie hesitated before nodding and Richie grinned. “alright, now, I'm fuckin exhausted. Let's get to sleep, dude.”

=====

*“I'm not gonna let you die...”*

Richie had promised to protect him, and what did Eddie do? Let him leave the clubhouse alone and almost die, himself. He couldn't leave him. He couldn't bare the thought of him getting hurt like that again. He could protect him if he'd just stay by his side.

Eddie crawled into the hospital bed beside Richie, curling up on his side, the guard railing helping keep him from falling off. He moved Riche's arm up to give him more room, draping it over his shoulder and laying his none casted arm over Richie's middle. His head laid on Richie's shoulder and he closed his eyes, feeling secure and a lot more comfortable than he was before. Why didn't he do this sooner? He might have been too concerned about what the doctors would think if they saw them, but at this point, he really didn't care.

He drifted off to sleep, thankfully able to get a more rested sleep than before.

-----

Richie's eyes fluttered open around 10 am after the doctors left the room. He had been awake but really didn't want to deal with questions, prods, briefing, all the shit he knew would come as soon as the doctors would notice he's awake, so he just pretended to sleep. He did feel someone beside him, though, cuddling up next to him. The doctors only had to check his vitals and replace the needle in his arm, so they didn't bother moving the person next to him. He could only assume now that it was Eddie. He was the only one out of his friends that would ever crawl up beside him and snuggle. He was the only one of his friends who he'd actually done that with about a

billion times.

He looked down at the sleeping ball, vision still blurred but it was at least bright enough in the room that he could see who it was. Yep, it was Eddie. Cuddled in at his side, head on his chest. He felt warmth course through his body. That was, until the pain came back. The painkillers must have worn off because he ached everywhere. The stitches in his stomach itched and throbbed, his back was still in pain, and the memories flooded back into the front of his mind like a Tidalwave. Before he knew it, he was shaking, sobbing, his grip tightening on Eddie's shoulder. He wasn't sure if it was the shaking or the tight grip that woke Eddie up, but he felt the bed shift as the other stirred awake.

"....Richie?" Eddie sat up on his elbow, looking to his friend with worry. This is what Mike was talking about. He wasn't the same as he was that morning. Richie never sobbed like this, not in front of his friends, not even when he showed up at Eddie's house on his sadder nights. He'd still smile, albeit forced, and say he's alright and that he just wanted to sleep. This wasn't normal. This wasn't *Richie* .

Wordlessly, Eddie laid his head on Richie's chest, arms gently around his shoulders. "....I'm.....so sorry, Rich....." that's all he could say. He couldn't find the words, they were jumbled and lost in his mind. He wanted to say more, he wanted to reassure him everything was going to be okay like Richie had done for him that last night, but he couldn't. He was lost and he felt utterly useless, just lying there, listening to the increasing heartrate as his friend sobbed.

Richie's hands came up, gripping onto Eddie's shirt tight, as if he would let go, he'd fly away. He sobbed harder as he shut his eyes tight, hoping that the visions forcing their way into his mind would go away, but they didn't. Patrick's sadistic smile, licking his lips, their pelvises colliding together over and over again until-

" **FUCK!!** " Richie swore, fist colliding with the guard railing, hand hitting the emergency call button on accident. The outburst surprised Eddie and he gasped aloud, jumping, but Richie's grip on him wouldn't let him sit up. He didn't know if he wanted to, anyway.

Rickie reached back over with his free hand, that one too gripping

tight, and buried his head into Eddie's neck as he let himself sob into his friend's comforting grip. His breath hitched in his throat, and he wailed, squeaked, coughed, sniffed.

Until the doctors filed into the room after receiving the emergency call, ripping Eddie off of Richie in a panic. "no, Ed!" Richie yelled, trying to hold onto Eddie, but there was no use, he wasn't strong enough.

"it's-it's okay, Rich, I'm here, okay, I'm not going to leave, I promise!!" he yelled as the doctors pushed him out of the room, but he wouldn't go far. As he was shoved out the door, he turned to the doctor. "he needs me, you're only making it *worse*-!"

"Listen, kid! *I'm* the doctor here, *not you* ! And if you want to keep sleeping here, I'd suggest you let us deal with the patient the way we have to, okay!? Now stay out here until we tell you it's alright the reenter." the doctor grumbled under his breath as he walked back into the room, shutting the door behind him and leaving Eddie to wait in the hall.

The first thing that popped into his head to say was, "fuckin homophobic prick-" but Eddie had no idea why he said that. Homophobic? Sure, maybe so, their cuddling and hugging and general closeness could make them look like they were more than just friends to outsiders, but that wasn't what they were, they were just friends, he was just comforting his friend!

He started to panic and panicking about a doctor thinking he's homosexual instead of the fact that his friend was distressed made him feel worse, which in turn made him panic even more. He *really* wished he had his inhaler with him now.

He paced the hall, mumbling random shit to himself, not even making any sense at all, just trying to distract himself to keep from hyperventilating, before he was tapped on the shoulder, causing him to yell and jump.

It was Bill and the others. "wh-what....are you d-doing, Eds?"

"is Richie okay?" Beverly stepped forward, looking a bit more



worried.

Eddie caught his breath, nodding. “y-yeah, um....well....I don’t know, actually... he....” his face turned red. He couldn’t possibly tell them he was snuggling Richie and the doctors thought they were gay! “when he woke up this morning....he started to sob.... like.....like uncontrollable sobbing. And I guess he got pissed for a second and....slammed his fist on the emergency call button, so the doctors rushed me out of the room.” he shrugged. That was the gist of it, excluding the snuggling and homophobic doctor. Those weren’t really that important, anyway.

“...that’s the first sign. Or.....I mean....that’s definitely not something Richie would do normally.” Mike spoke.

“Yeah, that’s.....that’s what I thought, too. He wouldn’t just.....burst out like that. At least not in front of anyone.”

At that point, the door swung open and the doctors filed out, the one who pushed Eddie out of the room stopping, still seeming a bit annoyed. “he’s alright, just a bit shaken up. We gave him more pain killers, so he might doze off again shortly.”

“so....we can go back in?”

“yes. Just....don’t hold him too tight, you might open a wound,” he mumbled as he walked away.

Eddie’s face flushed and Ben spoke up. “....hold him too tight?”

“don’t worry about it, come on.” smooth. That definitely didn’t scream ‘something’s up’ at all. The others looked at each other before following Eddie into the hospital room.

Richie’s bed was in an upright position so he could sit up now that he was awake, and he sat as still as ever, cold stare fixated on the wall across the room. His eyes were sunken, red, and watery, and he looked drained, emotionless. He didn’t even register when his friends walked in, slowly approaching his bed.

“Richie?” Bev spoke, approaching his right side. “Richie, honey, are you okay-” she reached gently down to touch his hand, though Richie

yanked it away, giving her a frightened look. Bev jumped a little, but gave an understanding smile. “okay.... okay, Rich, you don’t want to be touched, I understand....” she nodded.

Richie sighed, closing his eyes and laying his head back. “no...Bev.... I'm sorry.... it just.....startled me....” his voice seemed distant. He was getting tired again, but he was sick of sleeping. Who knew, Richie Tozier, the night terror insomniac was tired of sleeping. He almost wished he could just deal with the pain and memories just so he didn’t have to sleep all the fucking time. If he didn’t hit the call button on accident, he’d still be holding Eddie. Eddie would have made the pain go away naturally. The doctors were unnecessary. This entire hospital was unnecessary. “....I wanna go home.....” he mumbled.

“you’ll go home s-s-soon, I'm s-s-sure of it.”

“Yeah. And....when you do, we’ll all come over and have a big sleepover. Watch a shit tone of horror movies and eat pizza until we barf.” Stan said with a side smile, Ben chuckling and nodding.

“totally. And....rock out to your favorite songs.”

Richie couldn’t help but grin at the thought of that, eyes still closed. He felt too weak to open them. “....promise?”

“fuckin promise, dude. 100% promise, right guys?” Stan stated, looking around. The others nodded and agreed, even Beverly.

“I’ll....convince my aunt to let me stay. Surely she’d be a little sympathetic.” her aunt wasn’t anywhere near as bad as her dad. He didn’t have authority over her anymore.

“awesome.... can’t.....wait....” he hummed, the fight to keep awake getting harder and harder. He ended up drifting off as his friends piled around him.

Eddie brought up the courage to crawl in next to Richie, arm around his waist and snuggling in at his side.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

ok, so gushing time! holy shit, I mean wow. I know most fics get way more hits, but honestly, when I first wrote the first chapter, I thought "no one's gonna like this, no one'll read it" because of the content. I mean, I was terrified of posting it, I still won't promote it on my tumblr because im scared people will attack me for it, but the feedback I've gotten so far has been nothing but supported, albeit a bit worried, but still in support, and it means a lot! i'm still scared each time I get a comment that it'll be negative, attacking me for writing an underaged rape scene, but I tried my best to make it clear this isn't a fetish fic, and making it as approachable for everyone as possible, but you never know. regardless, I won't stop writing this fic until I'm done. I am determined to see this through, and I'm so glad I have so much love and support. honestly, kudos and comments, especially comments, are a huge motivator. seeing that people really love my fic and want to see more makes it so much easier to sit down and write.

anyways, thank you so much, i hope you all continue to stick along for the ride!

## 6. wear your glasses, Richie

### Summary for the Chapter:

richie's recovery is slowly progressing, though he still has a few hiccups and bumps to get himself through and Eddie decides to check up on his mom.

### Notes for the Chapter:

wow, so I just started this chapter today and didn't at all expect to finish it until a few days from now, but hey, here ya go I guess. this is why I shouldn't give estimates as to when something will be finished.

also, I discovered after posting the last chapter that desktop version of AO3 makes \_\_\_\_ (underscore) and ----- (hyphen) look completely the same if they aren't like right next to each other, but in mobile browser they look the same way they look in the word document, so ONCE AGAIN I have to redo the breaks. here's the NEW break key:

===== (equals sign) signified the beginning and end of a flashback.

----- (hyphen) signifies a skip forward in time, whether that be a long or short time

~~~~~ (tilde) still just signifies the beginning and end of potentially triggering content

Richie was off and on for a few days. Every time his meds would wear off, he'd be back to pain and to panic, memories flooding back into the forefront of his mind, which would eventually alert the doctors that they needed to give him more painkillers. He'd fight it, say he didn't need it through the tears, but they'd do it anyway because his comfort and recovery was more important than him wanting to stay alert and awake, though Richie would put it as, "they just don't want to deal with my bullshit."

four days after he first woke up, Richie was more able to stay off of

pain meds than he had been. His friends would visit often, reluctantly bringing him school work packets, and he'd reluctantly work on them since he had nothing else to do, and since his mom would hound him to do his work to "help him focus his mind on other things" and "it's not good to sit here and watch tv all day!". What did she know what he did all day, anyway? She was only there for about four or five hours each evening since she was "so swamped" with work, and had to work overtime to get a head start on paying the medical bills. her excuse for his dad only visiting him once this entire time was the same. He felt like those were all excuses. Just like the doctors, he felt like his parents didn't want to deal with his bullshit either.

He was a wiz at school, especially math, despite his personality and the way he chose to spend his free time, so it didn't take him a long time to finish his work. School was just utterly boring to him. It was too easy; he needed a challenge to keep himself engaged. That's why he liked video games so much. They were fun and engaging and, when playing against people as good at the games as him or better, presented a challenge that school just didn't present. God, he missed video games so much.

On the subject of video games, the one thing his parents did that could possibly redeem them of their absences was boring him a gift on the third day. It was a brand-new Nintendo Game Boy, the first of Nintendo's handheld systems. The console had released just that year, and ever since its release, Richie had been begging his parents for it. He knew they had gotten it for him months ago and had been waiting for Christmas to give it to him, they were really bad at lying. He'd talk about it to his mom at dinner and she'd just smile and go, "well, you know we can't afford that right now, but if you ask *Santa* for it, I am sure he'd bring it to you!" Richie didn't believe in Santa. He hadn't since he was 10. As a 13-year-old, that wasn't all that long ago, but still. He knew his parents got it for him, and that it was stashed somewhere in their home. They must have felt obligated to give it to him sooner since he'd been through a lot in the past few days. Maybe they saw he was onto their real reason for not visiting that often and wanted to buy his love back. Either way, he was less bored now.

The only person who really stayed was Eddie. The rest of his friends

visited him when they could, but Eddie was a constant. He did go to school, but he'd be back right after, and he stayed with him each night, sleeping in the small spot of bed next to his left side, using Richie's chest or arm as a pillow most nights.

Eddie still hadn't gone home. His mom still hadn't tried to find him, bring him home, call the hospital, go to school and abduct him after class, nothing. It was like she actually didn't care about him anymore. She really gave up on him. He was admittedly very worried about his mom, but he was too scared at this point to check up. She was fine. She had to be fine.

Every night, He had to hand wash his clothes in the sink in the small bathroom in Richie's hospital room. Thankfully, there was a shower, since this was an extended stay room, so he was able to shower every night too, but having to wear the same clothes over and over again, even when washed by hand, was just not right to him. Upon washing his cloths, Eddie would wear a hospital gown, being sure to pin the back shut so his bare ass wasn't out to the world and place his wet clothes on the air conditioner under the window to dry overnight. The gown was his nightly wear, and, for Richie, sleeping next to Eddie when they were both wearing nothing but hospital gowns was very difficult. He didn't know, however, that it was also difficult for Eddie. They both tried not to think about it.

On the fourth day, Richie spent most of his morning watching reruns of the game show Chain Reaction, yelling at the tv when the participants didn't get a word or phrase that he thought was painfully obvious and playing Super Mario land on his new Game Boy. Boring as hell, but at least he wasn't sleeping. And the game and tv show helped a bit at keeping his mind focused, for the most part. He did, however, find that if he sat staring off into space for too long, the memories came back, and the panic would set in yet again, and goddammit he was so fucking sick of crying, so sick of seeing Patrick's face, so he obsessively made sure he was doing *something* , whether it was playing the same game for hours or browsing the small tv for anything at all to watch. He would glance over at the clock anxiously, just wanting Eddie to come back from school already. Eddie's constant presence helped keep Patrick's memory at bay.

The time was a little after three PM. Eddie would be arriving soon from school. Richie found himself getting bored of the game and he glanced over toward his glasses on the side table, just staring them down. He needed them to watch tv, but he didn't want to put them on. Richie barely wore his glasses. He could see alright up close, but far away was a blur. Even so, he got a pain in his chest anytime he'd put them on.

=====

When his mom and dad brought his new glasses on the first day after he awoke, the same look as his old ones just not broken, he had just woken up from another long-ass sleep. The painkillers were just wearing off, but he tried his best to hide the pain in favor of staying awake for a while longer.

"Hey, sweetie, how are you doing today...?" his mom asked in a sweet, sympathetic tone. Richie stared at her with a blank expression before shrugging. She sighed and took his glasses out of her purse. "well here, we got you new glasses since your old ones are.... 'evidence' now...." she didn't like thinking about that. Her boy's clothes, glasses, even his body was evidence. She didn't want to think about the implications. She still didn't know exactly what happened to him. All she knew was he was violated and beaten. She didn't *want* to know anything else.

She handed over the glasses to Richie, who looked them over before placing them on. the moment they came in contact with his face, the words, "they make you look fuckin ugly." played in his head, as if Patrick were right next to him, whispering in his ear. He gasped a sharp breath, tossing them off his face, and began to panic cry as his mom comforted him and asked what was wrong.

His father just grunted angrily and said, "those things are expensive, don't break them!" he didn't understand. They both didn't understand. No one understood.

"Wentworth! Not the time!"

"I-I c-can't, mommy, I can't--" he slurred out, feeling like a fucking baby. He never called her mommy. He felt so small and helpless.

“can’t what, Richie? You need to talk to me, I don’t.... I don’t know how to *help* you,” she said softly, running a hand through his hair, of which he squirmed away from.

“theythey m-make me look.....fucking ugly....” he panicked, heavy breathing. He could hear his dad wanting to yell at him for his language, but he held his tongue. Now wasn’t the *time*, *Wentworth*.

Maggie looked toward Richie’s face, more worry on it now. “who told you that-”

“PATRICK, who the h-hell else!?he wanted me to look sexy-”

“Okay, that’s enough!” Wentworth exclaimed, making Richie jump and close his eyes tight as his dad walked over to his right side and pressed the regular call button, which allowed the caller to speak with a doctor. “come in here and give my boy something to *help him*, please.”

Richie grunted, holding onto his mom who looked toward his dad. “Wentworth!”

“I don’t need to know what that *kid* said to him, Maggie, I didn’t come here to hear about how my *son* was *molested*I’ll be in the cafeteria...” he left the room with a huff, the slam of the door making Richie jump again. He knew he meant well. He didn’t know how to deal with his own emotions. He didn’t know how to deal with the fact that his son had been raped.

Maggie sighed, running a calming hand down her son’s cheek. “....I’m sorry, Rich.... wear them when you’re ready, okay? We can see about getting you contact lenses when you get out.”

As the doctors filed in, Maggie got up and placed the glasses on the end table before heading out. The doctors worked on sedating Richie for the millionth time. He faught it but passed out eventually.

= = = = =

Now it was about three days after that incident . His father hadn’t been back to visit since. His mom said he was working really hard. He knew that was a lie. He just didn’t want to face him like this.

Richie had gotten better at wearing his glasses. He told himself ‘so fucking what if I look ugly to him? Why would I want to look sexy for him? Looking ugly meant he looks at me with want and need less.’ oddly enough, that helped, along with his friends, after he told them why he was scared of wearing his glasses, telling him that was bogus and that he looked great with or without glasses. Patrick's opinions were invalid. Even so, he still had to psych himself up to put them on every time.

As he was staring the glasses down, the door swung open, making Richie yelp and jump. It was Eddie, and the other boy looked at him worriedly. “ah! Sorry, Rich, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to frighten you, are you okay!?”

Richie sighed and waved a hand. “it's okay, Eds, it's okay. I was justspacing out, and you startled me. I'm fine.” he gave Eddie a side smile.

Eddie sighed and walked over to Richie, who scooted over in the bed to give him room to sit. “you weren't thinking about.....he who should not be named, right?” Eddie asked, rooting in his backpack and taking out Richie's school packet.

“no, no, I was.....I was psyching myself up to put on my glasses. But now that you're here, I....don't need them. I have this....stupid school work to do, and I can see to do it just fine.” he took the packet and pulled up the small table that goes across his bed for him to eat his food on, placing it so that the both of them could use it at the same time, and started to work immediately.

Eddie watched him for a moment before taking out his own homework and starting to work on that. It was quiet between the two of them and a good bit of time passed before Eddie spoke up. “I think.....I think I'm going to.....check up on my mom...” Richie looked up to Eddie with a raised brow. “t-tomorrow. After I get off of school, before coming here.... justwanted to let you know so you're notworried when I'm not immediately here....” he knew Richie watched the clock for him.

“ why ...?” Richie didn't mean for that to come out as angry and upset as it did.

“we -well, um.....I just.....I'm worried, Rich, she hasn't tried to find me or beg me to come home or....really *anything* and it's been four days. **Four. Days. Rich.** You know just as well as I do that the police would have been here to drag me home after 24 hours.”

Richie sighed deep, sitting back. He was angry. Why was he angry? Eddie was just worried about his mom, why was he *angry* ? “ fine..... okay, just.....please....come back, don't let her keep you home.” there it was. That was why he was upset. He didn't want Eddie to leave him in here alone.

Eddie understood and just nodded, giving a soft side smile to Richie before they started back in their school work.

Two hours later, right on time, the rest of their friends filed in, all sitting around on Richie's bed, telling him about school, about the drama, about what they had for lunch, really anything besides stuff pertaining to Patrick's gang. Patrick still hadn't been found yet, but Belch and Vic were still assholes in their own right. Just not as bad as they usually are. Maybe they felt bad? Who knows.

After the chitchat and Richie trying to teach Eddie how to play Tetris, albeit very frustrating for everyone since Eddie was terrible at video games, they opted to binge-watch the marathon of Full House that was playing on TV as a countdown for the new season's premiere that night. This meant Richie had to quickly give himself an internal pep talk before taking a deep breath and placing his glasses on his face. His heart only ached for ten seconds this time, so there was some progress! The little things mattered.

A few hours passed and visiting hours had ended, though the doctors always let Richie's friends stay a while longer. His mom had visited for a bit in between, checking up on him, asking him about his day, talking with his friends for a moment, the usual. She never stayed that long. Knowing Eddie was constantly here made it easier for her to leave.

After his friends left and Eddie came back from eating dinner at the cafeteria, Eddie set into his nightly routine of showering, hand washing his clothes, donning his hospital gown, and crawling into bed. Richie still hadn't showered. He couldn't bare the thought of seeing himself naked. Especially with the carving scars on his stomach, reminding him of who he *belonged* to.

No

He didn't belong to anyone. Especially not him.

No one had the heart to tell Richie he smelled really bad. He used deodorant to combat the stench, but it only did a little to help. Everyone knew why he wasn't ready, so no one tried to make him. The doctors were the only ones who tried to talk him into showering, but he wasn't biting. Not yet. He just couldn't.

Eddie learned to get used to the smell. The only thing that really bothered him was how unsanitary it was, but he kept that to himself and just washed up before school.

As they snuggled down in bed, Richie spoke up. "the doctor said I have to shower tomorrow...." Eddie looked up to Richie. "he said four days without washing up is bad for my health and that I need to face my fears."

Eddie's brows furrowed. "that's.....bullshit.... they shouldn't make you do it if you're not ready."

Richie shrugged. "guess they don't care if I'm ready or not."

Eddie scoffed, laying his head back down onto Richie's shoulder. "whatever. That guy's just a homophobic asshole, anyway."

"....homophobic?" Richie raised a brow and Eddie's eyes shot open face red.

"ah....umhe just..... I-I mean, he sees the way we....are, he thinks we're....." he shook his head quickly. " I -it's okay, I'm probably just thinking too much into it, let's j-just sleep."

Richie was.....genuinely curious. What the hell was Eddie saying? The

doctor thought they were a couple? Was that the reason they weren't forcing Eddie to go home? All the weird looks they got made too much sense now.

He wouldn't press the issue, though. He had to try to sleep now without the help of his drugs. He had been so used to them that he wasn't quite sure if he'd be able to or not.

The next day, 2:45 pm

Eddie reluctantly walked back home after school instead of taking the public bus to the hospital. He had to make sure his mom was okay, and....at least *try* to talk to her about everything. About why he needed to stay with Richie until his friend was back home. Above all else, he needed to make sure she didn't hate him. Why was she so absent this entire time? He had to know.

He slowly made his way up the stoop, taking a deep breath, the memory of when he came home the day they killed It coming back to mind. "you can do this, Eddie.... just talk to hercalm her down.... don't be a dick...." he spoke softly to himself before taking out his house key and opening the door.

The moment he stepped in, a stench wafted in the air and he immediately gagged and cupped his hand over his mouth. It smelled like something rotten.

"mommy....?"

Notes for the Chapter:

ooohhhhhh boy, a cliffhanger, what do y'all think is going on? here we go, folks.

anyway, if you'll excuse me, I gotta go to bed cause I have work at 4 am :')

7. mommy's boy

Summary for the Chapter:

Eddie deals with some serious stuff at his house and Richie finally takes a shower.

Notes for the Chapter:

another one written in one day. I need to calm down, man, I'm out of control! anyway, I hope you like it!

Eddie stepped through the door slowly, body shaking like a scared chihuahua in a blizzard. His heart raced. All he could hear was the sound it made and his staggered breathing beneath his cupped hand. He felt like crying. Why wasn't she answering him? And what in god's name was that *smell* ? It was worse than the sewers. It was worse than that deer carcass that's been on the side of the road for months. He dreaded the thought that came to his mind as he froze at the Livingroom entry way. He could hear the tv. That's all he could hear. "mommommy...? m-mommy, please...." his voice squeaked as he started to tear up. He didn't want to move. The smell was coming from the Livingroom, the tv static was coming from the Livingroom, but no other sounds, no other smells, no other feelings but dread and the worst possible scenario.

He took a deep breath and rounded the corner, immediately doubling over and vomiting onto the ground at the site. There, in her chair, was his mom. Dead. Decomposing.

(trigger warning for graphic depiction of a dead body)

~~~~~

Maggots and flies swarmed, eating her lifeless corpse. There was blood everywhere. Her throat was slashed, her stomach was slashed, she looked like she had been there for a while. A *long* while.

~~~~~

“o-oh f-f- fuuuCK !! HOLY **SHIT** !!” he started to panic, hyperventilating, looking around frantically for his fanny pack. She had it. When she left, he *threw it at her* , oh my god, the last thing he said to her was ‘I’m not your *baby* anymore, mom!’ she was dead. She was fucking *dead* , and the last conversation he had with her was an argument that most likely hurt her feelings really bad. What the hell happened to her!?

As he was frantically searching around for his inhaler, he looked up to the wall in the Livingroom and his heart sank.

On the wall, written in what he can only assume is his mom’s blood, was:

“stay away from Richie”

And

“he’s mine, Eddie”

The initials “R + E” was also written all around the warnings, frantically scrawled like a mad man. Some written in blood, some carved into the walls, some written in....god, was that *shit*!?

Eddie vomited once more before collapsing onto the ground, passing out from loss of oxygen due to hyperventilation .

Three hours had passed. *Three hours* . Richie was counting. he was extremely worried. He had called Eddie’s house after the first hour, but no answer. He had called again ten minutes later, but no answer. Stan had dropped off Richie’s packet this time, about a half-hour after school let out, and chose to stay since Richie was looking....worried.

“rich, do you want me to go check on him? Would that help?” Stan asked, looking over to the other who hadn’t even started working yet. He was sitting up in bed, staring down at his paper, fiddling with the pencil in his hand. Every once in awhile, he’d squint at the clock across the room, then back down to his paper. He read the first few questions over and over about a million times in his head, but couldn’t register them.

Richie glanced up at Stan who was on the bed where Eddie usually sat, using the side of the table that Eddie usually used to do his homework. He just stared at Stan, and Stan patiently waited for an answer. All Richie could do was nod in response. He hadn't said a single word since he got there. Stan sighed and nodded back, packing up his things. "okay. I'll head over. I'll call you when I know what's up, sokeep an eye on the phone." Richie nodded again, watching Stan leave and he did just that. He grabbed the phone, pulling it from the end table and placing it on the table across his lap, hand on the receiver, ready to answer immediately .

Stan was admittedly worried for Eddie, as well. Which is why when he left the hospital, he rode his bike like hell to Eddie's house. With someone like Patrick on the loose, this had him fearing the worst.

Normally he wouldn't risk injuring his bike and take the time to prop it up, but he didn't feel like he had the time. Especially since, as he rode up to Eddie's home, he saw his door was open just a crack. They'd never leave their door open.

Stan ran up the steps and rammed his shoulder into the door, slamming it open the rest of the way. He saw Eddie laying on the ground and ran to him, though stumbled and cupped his hands over his nose and mouth as he got wind of the rotting flesh and saw what was in the Livingroom. "holy shit, oh FUCK!!" Stan shouted as he saw the corps, collapsing to his knees beside Eddie and shaking his shoulders. "E-Eddie, fuck, Eddie, wake up!"

Eddie grumbled, head moving side to side slowly as he regained consciousness. Only a few seconds after awaking, he gasped, springing up into a sitting position. He remembered what happened. "MOMMY!!" he yelled, trying to get up to run to her, but Stan grabbed him around the waist, holding him back. "no!! Stan, l-let me go! mommy!!" he sobbed, trying to pull from Stan's grasp, reaching out to her. This wasn't real. None of this was real!

"Eddie! Eddie, she's gone, you can't! she's *gone*, Eds!!"

"no! No, she's not, she can't, she's not, she — **FUCK!**" Eddie fell back

on his knees, sobbing just the same as Richie did the day he woke up. Stan moved to pull Eddie into a close hug, comforting his friend the best he could. He noticed the writing on the wall. This shit had Patrick written all over it.

Stan called the police, and then their friends, but neglected to call Richie. He didn't know what to say to him. Hey, yeah, Eddie's okay but he was passed out on the ground in a pool of his own vomit because he came home to find the rotting corpse of his mom. That wasn't something Richie needed right now.

Eddie had calmed. He sat on the floor of the kitchen, knees to his chest, staring at the same spot on the wall. The rest of their friends had come immediately and were comforting Eddie the best they could. This was a lot of shit to deal with in such a small span of time.

As the kids huddled in the kitchen, the police were in and out of the Livingroom , taking samples and blocking off the entrance.

“we need to figure out what to say to Richie. He's waiting for me to call him, but.....I don't.....think we should tell him the truth.” Stan spoke, phone receiver in hand. The rest just looked to him, not sure what to say.

Mike spoke up. “he's going to find out eventually and if he finds out from the news, or his parents, or something else that's *not* us, he might not be too happy.”

“that may be true but....we need to think about Richie's recovery. I mean, we allsaw it.....the words on the wall.....this is Patrick's doing.” Beverly sighed, shaking her head. “knowing that Patrick.....is after Eddie....-”

Eddie sighed and stood up, holding his hand out for the phone. “let me.... I'll talk to him.”

Stan nodded a bit, handing him over the receiver and dialing Richie's hospital room number.

Richie immediately picked up. “hello??”

“Hey, Rich.” Eddie tried his best to sound normal. “heh, um, sorry I’m taking so long, I-”

“Eds?? Holy shit, I called three times, why didn’t you answer!? I’m fuckin worried sick, dude!”

“ah....I’m....sorry, you know....m-mom... she had a fit and made me.....take a decontamination bath. She must have taken the phone off the hook to avoid any calls.”

“shitokay , okay, just....just as long as you’re okay...”

“y-yeah yeah, I’m okay.... I’ll....I’ll be a little while longer, but I’ll be back in a bit.” they said their goodbyes and Eddie hung up, turning to his friends. “ Richie.....Richie is the most important person right now. Not me.... *Richie* . Okay?” he started to tear up again. “so.....so don’t worry about me. I’m *fine* . We’re here for Richie, remember? For Richie....” he sighed, walking passed them. “I’m....going to grab some of my clothes.” as he walked into the hall, he watched the EMTs carry the covered body of his mother on a stretcher out the front door. He ran up the steps.

The others all looked at each other, all-knowing what this meant. This meant that, if Eddie hadn’t stayed at the hospital with Richie, Eddie would have been dead too. Eddie wasn’t safe alone, Richie wasn’t safe alone.....were any of them safe alone? They had to find Patrick. Were the cops even trying?

Beverly stood up, stomping over to an officer. “Patrick Hocksetter ,” she spoke and the officer turned to her, brow raised.

“yeah? What about ‘im?”

Beverly gestured to the writing on the wall. “ *this* . It’s Patrick’s work. Your investigation department had to have gotten the results back from Richie Tozier’s rape kit, right? I don’tknow how that stuff works, but you at least have enough evidence to show who did that to him, and I guarantee any evidence coming from *this* will come back as the same.”

“Look, kid, we have been searching high and low for that boy even

before your friend's incident, so if you're worried we're not trying, trust me, we are." he looked between her and the others behind her. "and I know what you're thinking. *Do not* take this shit into your own hands like some heroes, leave it to the professionals." the officer left the hall back into the Livingroom and Beverly looked back to the others. They had a look of determination on their faces that only meant one thing. They were *definitely* going to take this matter into their own hands.

Eddie packed up his things and headed out after answering the same bullshit questions he had to answer when Richie was hurt. I just got here a few hours ago and saw this. I have an actual alibi this time, I was staying at the hospital with my friend. My friends also have real alibies, they were either home or at that same hospital. Yes, I have a suspect in mind, Patrick fucking Hocksetter . No , I have no fucking idea where he could be.

He had time to compose himself on the bike ride to the hospital. He was upset, sure, his mom was dead. He was an orphan, both of his parents long gone. He had absolutely no idea what he was going to do. His closest family member lived almost an hour away. He didn't want to leave. Not only did he not want to leave his friendsleave Richie, but he knew moving away, your memory of the town got blurry. Until you forget everything, everyone. He didn't want to forget his friends. He didn't want to forget Richie. He didn't want to forget the butterflies that flew in his chest when he was near him, or the way reading that carving made his cheeks flush crimson, or the way he smiled and giggled like a school girl anytime he'd listen to the mixtape he made him, or the nights he thought of Richie and would get 'excited' and touch himself and--

Eddie crashed his bike into a pole, grunting on the grass. A passerby who had watched the kid space out as he rode and ran straight into the pole, stopped. "are you okay, kid?"

"ugh...." he groaned, slowly getting up and nodded. "y-yeah I'm fine...." he got up and grabbed his bike, deciding to walk the rest of the way.

“y-you sure? You hit your head pretty bad-” the man called after Eddie, who kept walking away.

“I said I'm fine.” realizing that was rude, he stopped, turning to the man and smiling. “thanks. But I'm....I have to gosee my friend. He's more important than me, right now.”

Eddie stumbled into the hospital room, sweaty and out of breath. He walked his bike almost the entire way to the hospital, and that was a lot of walking. Richie's brows furrowed. “Eds? Jesus, dude, you look like shit.”

Eddie chuckled. “yeah, uh.....decided to....walk this time. B-bad idea.” he sighed and plopped himself onto the bed.

Richie was actually doing homework now. Hearing back from Eddie made him able to focus on the packet of work in front of him. He was almost done. “thedoctors said I need to either shower *now* by myself, or they're going to have to assist shower me....” he sighed deeply. He *really* wasn't ready to see himself naked. He knew that shit was going to set panic in.

The doctors had come that morning to take the needles and wires out of him. The removal of his catheter wastraumatic , and he was very thankful Eddie wasn't there to witness it, but at least he wasn't tubed up and bed-bound anymore.

Eddie frowned. “those assholes....” he placed a hand on his shoulder. “I'll....be right here, okay? You can do it, Rich....”

“that's, um.....that's the thing..... I know ifI had someone to talk to, It'd be easier, so.....and I mean this might sound weird, so feel free to say no, but.....do you think you can like sit in the bathroom and talk to me while I shower?”

Eddie's face flushed and he froze up. Implications popped into his head, but he quickly shook them away and nodded. “....sure, dude, that's....that's no problem.” he sat up as Richie went to get out of bed. Richie winced, moving body parts that haven't really moved in more

than five days. As he took his first step, he gasped and doubled over, hand cupping his genitals over his gown. Eddie looked to him with worry and stood up. "Rich?"

"shit..." he forgot about his recovering testicle! Being in bed for a week made the pain in his sack less painful and more uncomfortable at times. Now that he was mobile, the uncomfortableness turned into pain. "my fucking nutts are on fire, dude..." he laughed, trying to make a joke. "...it's okay....um.... I'm going to get undressed, I'll call you in when I'm....ready...." Eddie watched Richie head into the bathroom and walked to the door himself, leaning against it to wait for Richie.

It took Richie a few minutes to bring up the courage to even start undressing. Luckily, it was one motion and the gown was off. He flinched at the feeling of air on his bare skin, pushing back the memory of undressing under the bridge. This was nothing like that. He was in a bathroom, alone, inside. Not outside, in the open air, with hungry eyes scanning his body.

He stood in front of the mirror, staring blankly at himself. The scars had closed, the stitches were removed two days ago, but the letters were still there, plain as day.

"sexy little whore."

He twitched as the words rang in his ears.

"now your mine"

*"you're unclean. Little gross fucking **whore**."*

Richie punched the wall, tears flowing. "fuck....stop..." he sobbed out, punching the wall a second time. " just s-STOP!" he punched again, the door swinging open.

Eddie ran in, grabbing Richie's arm before he could punch again. His knuckles were bleeding. "Rich! Hey, Richie, hey, come on, man, it's okay, breath!"

Richie hyperventilated, shaking, pulling from Eddie's grasp and backing away. "Eddie! D-don't look!"

Eddie grunted, face flushed as he covered his eyes and turned around. "O-okay, okay, I'm not looking."

Richie sighed quiverly, glancing in the mirror once more before opening the transparent shower door and walking in, turning on the water.

Eddie sat straddling the toilet seat, back turned away from the shower, arms resting on the back of the toilet. "sothey say when you'll be released?"

"yeah.... momsaid it should be in the next few days. Maybe even tomorrow if I'm lucky."

Eddie smiled. "heh, really? That's awesome, dude. Just in time for the weekend." tomorrow was Saturday. He'd be able to sleep in next to Richie and help him situate himself back at home if his parents let him. He wondered how in the hell this was going to work. He didn't have a home to go back to. Well....technically he did, but it was a crime scene now....and with no one alive to pay the bills, it wouldn't be long before the electric, heat, water, everything would be shut off and house be taken away by the state. No doubt his aunt and uncle would be contacted immediately and come to take him to their house. He didn't want to leave. He couldn't leave....

"Eddie??" Richie must have been talking to him for a minute while Eddie spaced out. "you okay?"

"shit, sorry, Rich, um.....what did you say?"

"I....justasked you if your mom would be okay with you....staying at my place for a bit-"

"yeah!" he coughed. "yes, I'm sure.....sure she will." he nodded. "I-I can.....stay with you as long as your parents will let me." he sniffled a bit, feeling tears threaten, but he pushed them back. Not the time. Not the time to cry.

Richie was worried. He knew something was up. Something happened when Eddie went home, he just didn't know what. Did his

mombeat him? Did she hurt him? Surely, she wasn't capable of that. He wouldn't ask now, though. He could tell Eddie didn't want to talk about it. He just focused on cleaning himself.

The rest of the shower went more smoothly than Richie thought it would. Eddie's company really did help a lot. They talked about small things, school, friends, homework. Richie told Eddie about the game he had been playing. Super Mario Land. It was just a small dude hitting boxes and jumping on enemies heads, but Richie seemed to really like it. It sounded a lot better thanwhat was that other one he played in the arcade? Street Fighter?

Eddie was able to wear real pajamas to bed this time since he brought a bag from home. Richie was still only able to wear a hospital gown, but it was at least less uncomfortable than it was with them both in nothing but an open gown. Sleeping, for Richie, was a lot easier that night, now that he had the freedom to turn any way he wanted. Certain positions still hurt his swollen testicle, but he managed to find a comfortable spot on his side, his arms wrapping tightly around Eddie and holding him close to his chest, just like he used to on the nights he needed someone close. It was all innocent. Just friends being close, friends holding each other as they slept.

As Eddie laid there, heart racing, face red, mind going a mile a minute.....he realized he wanted this to be more than just a friend thing.

Notes for the Chapter:

i'm so sad for Eddie, man, it hurt so much to write this. why do i like to make my favs suffer? also Jesus these kids need a break.

idea for Eddie accompanying Richie in the bathroom while he showered was originally posted in comments by Manikku!

8. the Richie Horror picture Show

Summary for the Chapter:

Richie is finally sent home from the hospital and the kids have a fun sleepover to celebrate.

insite on Patrick's whereabouts is revealed.

Notes for the Chapter:

warning: recreational use of weed is mentioned.

this chapter also has some spoilers for the movie Rocky Horror Picture Show. highly recommend giving the movie a watch, it's on youtube for 3.99

also note that I have not read the book. I have some knowledge of Eddie and Richie in the book, but not much of anyone else. I know that Belch and Vic are more violent in the book, but I am purely going off of what I see of them in the movie(s), so that is why I interpret them as less violent without Patrick and Henry.

anyway, I hope you like it!

Monday, September 11th, 8 days after the incident

Vic slammed his hand on the locker next to Beverly's, making her jump and drop her books. She sighed and rolled her eyes, leaning down to pick her books back up. The shit they did was annoying, but they were no more than classic school yard bullies. They'd smack their lunch treys, make fun of them, scare them, push them down, take their things, but never hurt them. Not ever since Henry was sent away and Patrick went missing. She wasn't sure if they were....forced to be so violent in fear of Henry or Patrick or both going after them, or if they were easing up on them because they felt sorry for them in a way. Either way, it was a lot more tolerable.

"Oops, did I scare ya~?" Vic spoke, laughing along with Belch as

they walked away. They high fived each other, as if that were the coolest thing they've ever done.

"hey!" Beverly shouted at them and the two slowly turned to her. She wasn't afraid of them anymore. She knew they wouldn't dare touch her.

"...you talkin' to us, punk?" Belch spoke, challenge in his eyes.

"yes. Tell me where Patrick is!"

The two looked to each other, a look of concern on their faces suddenly replacing the challenge in their eyes. Belch looked down and shook his head. "...I dunno."

"you don't know? You don't know where he is?"

"no, okay? We don't know! We ain't like him, ya know, he's a fuckin creep, we just like picking on you kids, not—fuckin what he did."

Vic sighed. "look, kid, stay the hell away from that freak, okay? I know he hurt your friend, but just let the police--"

"the police?...!" Beverly scoffed out a laugh. "the police aren't doing shit for Richie. They haven't even visited him to get his statement yet." she shook her head. "i don't think they even believe he was raped. Despite the evidence."

The two looked at each other. "how do you know that?"

She shook her head. "the way they talk? I've seen it all before. Look, I've--" she paused a moment. She couldn't possibly tell her school bullies such a privet part of her life. ".....I just know, okay? I know...."

They weren't stupid. Or at least not fully stupid. They knew what she was saying. That she's been through it all before. But by whom, they had no idea. They figured Henry; with the way he spoke about her. They were dead wrong. It was much worse than Henry.

Vic ran a hand through his hair, contemplating something before stepping forward. "fine. Okay, we might—we might know where he

could be, but that doesn't mean that is where he is, okay? But you kids can't go there alone, you'll need someone to....protect you." he looked back at Belch who just nodded and stepped forward as well.

"yeah. We've been wantin' to give that creep a swift kick in the nutts for a while, anyway."

She gave a slight smile at the two older boys. Maybe they weren't so bad after all. Save for the annoying bullying.

"we'll go tonight--"

"not tonight." she interrupted. It was the night Richie finally came home from the hospital. They promised him they'd have a sleepover. They couldn't possibly back out of that promise. "...Richie's....coming home today, and we promised we'd have a sleepover to celebrate." she nodded. "....how about.....tomorrow?" she shrugged.

The two sighed and looked at each other, then back at her. "fine. Tomorrow, then."

Richie would be lying if he didn't say he was eager as hell to be out of that damned hospital. He was so utterly bored, and itching to not be bound to one room all the time. Most importantly, though, he was so ready to have a fucking cigarette.

Eddie stayed from school. He didn't have a mom anymore to tell him he can't miss school, so he just didn't go. He slept in with Richie, curled tightly in the other's arms, only awoken when Maggie drew open the shades.

Both Eddie and Richie groaned as the sun beamed in, their grips tightening on each other. "rise and shine, it's time to go home!"

Sitting up, Richie rubbed at his eyes and yawned. The sun was bright, blinding his eyes momentarily. Eddie still clung to his waist, refusing to let go. Five more minutes.

His mom's enthusiasm was not reciprocated on the outside, but he was partying on the inside. He wanted to be home so bad. He gave

his mom a slight sleepy smile. “yippee~....” he mumbled with all the enthusiasm he could muster up before reaching down to shake Eddie’s shoulder. “Eds, dude, get your face out of my ass and get up.”

“language, Rich!” his mom called, half paying attention as she gathered Richie’s things up.

Richie didn’t pay her any mind. He just watched as Eddie stirred awake, nuzzling his face into his hip and grumbling. It was so adorable. He didn’t know how he got so lucky as to be able to not only share a bed with the boy of his dreams for over a week but also cuddle with him? Without it being weird? It was never weird when he’d show up at Eddie’s window and hold him while they slept, but that was only a few times here and there, not several days in a row. This right here would be the only thing he’d miss from staying in the hospital.

Eddie finally sat up, yawning. His hair didn’t get as messy as Richie’s, but it was still all over the place, and it was utterly cute. Richie just wanted to run his hands through the matted mess.

Richie found himself spacing out when the tap on his shoulder startled him into jumping slightly. His mom was behind him, and she gasped. “im sorry, sweetie, I didn’t mean to scare you! I just wanted to give you your clothes. You have to change before we can leave.” she handed Richie over a pile of clothes. “I brought your favorite floral shirt, too!”

Richie stared down at the outfit in his hands. A white floral hawaiian style dress shirt with palm trees in black patterned all over it sat on top. He frowned, face going pale as a memory pushed its way into the forefront of his mind.

= = = = =

“put this back on.” Patrick thrust ed Richie’s Hawaiian over shirt back at him after a brief moment of silence, startling him into recoiling out of habit. Once he realized what was happening, he shot Patrick a confused look. “you god damned stupid? I said put it back on!”

He....wanted him to put on clothes? Richie didn’t argue with that. He

just grabbed the shirt and put it back on. Patrick nodded, biting his lips as he scanned his eyes all over the younger boy's body. "yeah.... yeah, that's it..."

now you're a sexy little whore."

=====

Richie gasped, instinctively tossing the pile of clothes out of his hands and on the ground at the foot of the bed before pulling his legs up to his chest, tears threatening his eyes. The words 'sexy little whore' played over and over in his head as he started to panic, accompanied by a loud ringing sensation that blocked out all sound from the outside world. His vision blurred even more than it already was, and he started to hyperventilate.

The only thing that managed to knock him out of his tranced panic was the slight sting on his cheek when Eddie hit him. Not enough to hurt, but enough to bring him back to reality. "Rich! Snap out of it, man, it's okay!"

"R-Richie, honey, what's wrong?" his mom's concerned voice came from one side of him, while Eddie's came from the other. He shook his head, blinking back into life and looked to and from the two on his sides. His face was drenched with tears and he could see even less now.

"I-I...." he stammered, snuffling some before rubbing his eyes. "I can't....wear that....i can't wear that, I can't--"

"wear what? Richie, what can't you wear?"

"the shirt! A-any of my....floral shirts! I c-can't wear them, he made me wear it because I look sexy in it, I don't--!!" his breath hitched in his throat and he started to sob and shake again. He didn't want to look sexy for him, he didn't want to look sexy, he didn't want--

Eddie took his hand.

Laced their fingers.

Held on tight. It felt so right and so warm. He didn't want to let go.

His breathing slowed and panic stopped.

“Richie, sweetheart, you don’t have to wear anything you don’t want to, okay?” his mom spoke low, a gentle hand on his shoulder. “I’m....so sorry, sweetie, I should have known....that would be a sore spot for you....” she should have known. After all, when they found him, all he was wearing was one of those shirts. He didn’t want to wear it. He couldn’t ever wear them again.

Maggie asked Eddie about a dozen times if he needed to stop by his home, or if he needed to ask his mom permission to stay the night. She had no idea what had happened. The news hadn’t caught wind of the situation yet. He didn’t want them to. He just wanted everything to be normal.

Richie’s case had already been sent out to the public, and the media had been dying to interview Richie. They had already bombarded his friends on their way home from school, including Eddie who just told them to leave him alone. As soon as Richie was let out, the press was waiting, as if Richie were a famous celebrity or something. He might as well have been.

A security guard had to walk them out to keep the reporters at bay, though it didn’t stop pictures being taken and cameras being shoved in his face. Richie kept his head down, staying silent as they walked. Eddie kept a grip onto Richie’s hand, fingers still laced. He shot glares at the reporters.

“Richie Tozier, how do you feel now that it’s been a week after your attack?”

“would you have any incite as to where your attacker maybe?”

“rumors are going around that your attacker carved their name into your stomach, is that true?”

Questions upon questions, Speculation upon speculation. So many flashes of light, so many voices, some including his mother who yelled at them to “get a life!” and “stop hounding my son!” he

wanted it to be over. How much further until they got to the car?

No one got their answers. They'd all most likely still report on it, saying "the victim is remaining silent about this case". They'd more than likely see the report later that night.

Eddie rode home with them, sitting in the back while Richie sat upfront. They rode in silence.

Richie settled down back at home and both him and Eddie ate the instant pancakes his mom had made him for breakfast. So much better than whatever they served at the hospital, even if it were instant. He missed sitting at a table and not doing all of his eating in the hospital bed. He missed none assisted bathroom breaks. The doctors had to monitor him in the restroom a few times for whatever reason. Very invasive. He missed his own bed. He missed his things, his tv, his movies, his radio and cassettes, his magazines, being able to snack whenever he wants. He knew being home would help him recover mentally much more than the hospital.

Richie and Eddie spent the day getting his room ready for the sleepover. They rolled out and blew up a few air mattresses, unrolled some sleeping bags, piled bean bag chairs around the tv, placed a bowl of candy and another of buttery microwaved popcorn. They had his mom help them bring down the board games from the hall closet and got to work on picking an assortment of movies. Richie had a lot of horror movies.

"Ohh, this one!!" Richie grinned, pointing to a VHS copy of Rocky Horror Picture Show. This was one of Richie's favorites to watch around the Halloween season, and October wasn't that far away. Why not start the tradition early with his friends? "it's not really scary, but it's weird and funny, we should totally watch it!"

Richie had been trying to get his friends to watch it with him, but they were all very skeptical about it. They knew enough to know it was very strange, didn't make sense half the time, and really sexual. They would always blow him off, but this time, they might have an obligation to watch it. Nevertheless, Eddie gave Richie a raised brow

look. “common, Eds, if you don’t like it, we never have to watch it again.”

Eddie sighed. “okay, okay, but you have to run it by the guys too.” Richie’s grin grew and Eddie couldn’t help but smile. Anything that made Richie happy. They had to remember; Richie was the most important person right now. Tonight was his night to reclaim his childhood.

There were a few more movies to choose from, but that one was a must-watch. With everything in place, Richie was getting really excited about the sleepover. This was the happiest he’s been all week.

It didn’t take too long for the others to arrive. They went home, packed their bags, and headed to Richie’s on their bikes. It was about half past three PM when the others piled into Richie’s room, flopping down on the bean bags and air mattresses, crowding around a game of Clue. Richie was Colonel Mustard. He was always colonel mustard. maybe it was because every time he played as the yellow peg, he’d win about 99% of the time. It was like a good luck charm for him. Or maybe he was just really good at clue. Regardless, he did win three out of the five games they played that night. Not half bad. No one complained about him winning or quit out of frustration. They did banter, but all in good fun, and “beep beep, Richie”d when he got too cocky about his wins, but in truth, they were all just really glad he was smiling and laughing. He hadn’t done much of that the entire seven days, and when he did, they could tell it was forced. But this time, it was genuine. Like he could finally, at least for the time being, be happy again.

By all means, Richie was not over what happened to him. He was just able to forget for the night. Let loose and let himself have fun. When bouts of depression and anxiety threatened to come up, he’d shove them away as best he could. This wasn’t the night for that. This was his night.

Richie laid out the movie choices on his bed and when Bill and Stan noticed the one Richie was most excited for, they simultaneously let out a groan. “r-r-rich, come on man, r-really?”

“whaaat? It's a cult classic, dude! And you've never even seen it, why judge it before giving it a chance?”

“the theme, Richie. It's weird.” Stan stated, hand on his forehead.

“it may be weird, but it's still a good movie!”

Ben, Bev, and Mike, being relatively new to the gang, didn't get the commotion. “.....what's weird about it?” Bev asked, taking a sip of her soda.

The others explained the weird theme to their knowledge, and how homoerotic and just straight out sexual it was, and admittedly, the three were skeptical and quite frankly confused as to why Richie, who had been sexually taken advantage of, would want to watch something with such a sexual theme.

“Oh come on, it's not all that bad, you're painting it in a bad light! And you only like see two boobs, maybe three, and the only time you see a penis is on statues, like David and shit!”

“...I've never even seen a real boob,” Eddie mumbled but mumbled a bit too loudly because everyone was staring at him. “.....what? have you guys?”

Bev chuckled. “yeah, every day.” she grinned.

Eddie blushed. “n-not you.” he wasn't even sure if he even wanted to see boobs. They just didn't appeal to him. Wait.....boobs didn't appeal to him? Why didn't they appeal to him?

The kids bantered for a moment about the movie choices, though they already knew in their hearts they'd be watching Rocky Horror. This was Richie's night, after all, anything he wanted to do was fair game. As long as it stayed legal, or at least as close to legal as they could get.

“maybe a little'a this will make watching the movie more enjoyable for you guys.” Richie grinned, reaching under his bed and pulling out a locked chest. This was where he kept anything he didn't want his parents finding. The key was always on him.

He opened the chest and, amongst unused condoms, some packets of cigarettes, porno mags, and lighters was a baggie of rolled blunts. Weed. Richie managed to score some weed from his drug dealer cousin every Christmas and he stockpiled that shit for special occasions. The kids didn't recreationally smoke the drug, but they did enjoy getting high every once in a while. Richie's dad was at work and his mom went grocery shopping, which takes hours, so they had plenty of time.

The only one who always opted out of smoking was Eddie. Sometimes Ben, but always Eddie. He was afraid of black lung, lung cancer, stained teeth, anything he or his mom could possibly think of to scare him away from trying the drug, but his friends didn't push him to smoke it. They weren't assholes. He always ended up getting contact high from the fumes, anyway.

After handing off a blunt to Bev to start the passing, Richie hopped up to place the VHS in the player. "hey, if you guys pop a boner, just think about dead puppies and shit, that's what I do."

"shut up, Richie," Stan grumbled.

"gross, dude." Mike shook his head.

The weed definitely helped them enjoy the movie more than they probably would have. Even straight lace Eddie, now high on fumes, chuckled at a few parts. It was fucking trippy as all hell to watch while high, and the gang barely even smoked anything. They only passed the blunt twice before putting it away and opting to devour the popcorn and candy instead.

It was weird. It was really weird, but still entertaining? They weren't sure if it was because of the weed but it wasn't half bad.

They would look over toward Richie during specific parts, especially during the part when Frankenfurter entered Brad's room and seduced him into letting him have his way with him. Richie seemed distant during that part. Was it the weed? Or was the theme of Brad saying no and Frankenfurter not giving up on his advances too close to

home all the sudden?

Truth be told, Richie always saw himself in Brad. The glasses, lanky body, their hair was a bit similar, and somewhat of their personalities. But really, that scene and the scenes after always spoke to him. The sexual awakening, realizing he's attracted to the touch of another man, giving in to the pleasure and soft touches, though he had never felt that touch before....that day. Maybe if things went differently. Maybe if Patrick were gentler, caring, soft, like Frankenfurter to Brad, he would have--

No.

It was still Patrick.

It didn't matter if he had tended to his needs and was soft and kind and didn't abuse him before and after, it was still Patrick, and he was the last person on earth he ever wanted to lose his virginity to.

This scene resonated with Eddie in a different way. He found it....hot? Why was it hot when the other scenes with the girls did nothing? Why did looking at Rockie's rippling muscles and his not at all easy to miss bulge do something to him but the girls in skimpy outfits and the exposed real breasts not do anything at all? He had much to contemplate on.

All In all, the movie was weird, and the guys agreed they had their fill for a lifetime and moved on to watch Child's Play instead.

The rest of the night consisted of more movies, jamming out to some of Richie's favorites, IE Guns n' Roses, Poison, any and all 80s rock bands, and eating pizza when Rickie's mom got back from shopping.

Night came and the kids settled down in their respective beds. Bev was given the one-person air mattress, Ben and Mike opted for the sleeping bags, Stan and Bill shared the double air mattress and Eddie and Richie shared Richie's bed. They talked for a bit, mostly about the day and the movies, but after a while, Bev spoke up.

".....I talked to Belch and Vic today...." everyone looked at her,

concern and confusion on their faces. She looked up to them. “they said....they might....know where Patrick Is.”

Richie’s chest seized up and he instinctively grabbed ahold of Eddie’s shirt. To which Eddie grabbed his head and held it tight.

“they know where he is?” Stan spoke up.

“they might.” Beverly reiterated. “They said....they would take us there....tomorrow. They said they’d protect us.”

“p-p-protect us? Th-them?”

She nodded.

“why would our bullies help us? Let alone protect us?” Mike stated. He was very skeptical.

“they said they’re not like him. They’ve been wanting to kick his ass for a long time.” she sighed. “look, We’ll have someone standing by with a walkie talky, ready to call the cops to our location if he’s there. It’s us against them, if this is a trap, we can fight back, I mean we fought a fucking shapeshifting demon for god’s sake, what do we have to lose?”

They all looked at each other and nodded, agreeing to the plan.

Richie was distant this entire time, spacing out toward the bedsheets. The others looked to him when he spoke up. “.....I.....I want.....to go too....”

“...Richie--”

“no, Bev.” he spoke louder, look of determination on his face as he sat up. “I’m going. I.....I need to go, okay?”

No one argued. They didn’t think it was a good idea at all, but they didn’t say no. They didn’t know Richie’s reasons for wanting to go, but they knew they had to be good reasons.

“I....I’m going....” his breath hitched in his throat as he fought back the urge to break down. “I’m going to make that bastard pay for what

he did to me....”

Notes for the Chapter:

IDK why I thought Richie would be a fan of this movie. I was a huge fan of it, and I kinda see my teen self in Richie, so I figured he'd like it too. plus, the first time I watched it with all my friends was at a sleepover in the party room of my garage when I was 13. it felt fitting, ya know?

9. the junkyard

Summary for the Chapter:

the losers go off to the junkyard to find Patrick and bring him to justice.

eddie can't go home.

Notes for the Chapter:

shit, it's taken me so long to get this one done, I'm so sorry!! I feel really bad, it's been more than 5 days, man. I've just been really busy with work and my family was here over the weekend, so it was a lot. I didn't realize how long it's been until I checked the updated date.

anyway, I hope you like it!! sorry again!

oh btw, we're SO CLOSE to 5000, just a few hundred more and i can upload the one shot!!

Richie and Eddie spent the night curled up, intertwined with each other like a cheaply made pretzel at the county fair. Richie hadn't slept this good in so long. Sure, they were up half the night giggling and playing games, and sure he'd been doing the exact same thing all week, but this wasn't a small, uncomfortable hospital bed. This was his bed, and honestly, his mattress was heaven at this point. His comforter felt like a cloud hugging him compared to the thin barely a blanket, blanket. Not to mention he wasn't being woken up every few hours for checkups, blood work, and the like.

It was about 6 am the next morning. They still had school, even though Richie didn't and they assumed Eddie was choosing to stay home again, as well, so they chose not to wake the two sleepyheads as they took turns getting ready in the bathroom down the hall.

"how long do you think It'll take for them to confess?" Ben asked, voice low as he and the others sat around, watching the two.

Stan scoffed. "Richie almost did. *Almost* . But that was a year ago, and honestly, I think that's the closest we're ever going to get." he shook his head.

" i bet Eddie will be the first to confess." Bev smiled.

Bill laughed slightly. "n-n-no way ."

"and what makes you say that?" Mike asked.

She shrugged. "just a woman's intuition." she grinned at them and stood up. "come on, we'll be late for school." the others reluctantly joined her, heading out the door without a word to the sleeping pair.

Richie was just barely awake. He could hardly process what was being said by the others. He caught the last bit of the conversation and laid there in utter confusion as the others left the room. Eddie? Confessing? About what? He grunted and squinted over Eddie's shoulders at the clock. It was far too early to care. His head fell back down on the pillow with a thunk and he promptly passed right back out.

Richie hadn't brushed his teeth on his own in over a week. The doctors had him down as a 'self-harm hazard'. Given his situation, his PTSD , what he's been through, all that shit, they took all precautions to keep him from self-harming or worse. Assisted bathroom breaks, assisted showers, he couldn't even brush his teeth alone. He didn't understand this. What kind of harm could he do with a *toothbrush* ?

This morning would mark the first none assisted teeth brushing in several days. At 8 in the morning, Richie found himself in the bathroom, staring himself in the mirror while leaning his hands on the sink. He felt weird. He thought maybe he was just still tired.

He caught himself spacing out, staring at his mouth and shaking his head to try and get the memory of what had been *done* to his mouth out of his head. He had almost forgotten about that part. Why would it choose to show up now, right before brushing his teeth? The mind is cruel and sadistic.

(trigger warning for graphic depiction of forced oral.)

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He tried to push it away, but it wasn't enough. The panic was starting to set in already. Suddenly, he could feel it. The ramming, painful sensation of Patrick's appendage down his throat. The sting and intense urge to vomit. He could taste the salt and sweat, the gross slimy precum. The more he could feel and the more he could taste, the more he shook and sobbed.

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With shaking hands, he picked up his toothbrush and placed a large dose of toothpaste on the bristles. "g-g- ge -t o-u-ut.... g- ge -get ou -t- t of m-y....my....m-m-m- mo - uth ! Get out of my....MOUTH!!" he screamed toward the mirror before shoving the toothbrush into his mouth and scrubbing frantically. He pressed hard, ramming the bristles into his gums, scrubbing them and his tongue raw. Blood soon mixed with the toothpaste, creating a bloody foamy froth spilling from his mouth and onto the floor and sink, but he didn't stop, he continued to scrub and sob, all while screaming "get the fuck out!!" it seemed the blood and raw pain from the scrubbing was unphasing him in his hysteric state.

Thankfully, Eddie was in the other room getting dressed. He blinked as he heard muffled sounds from down the hall and poked his head out the door. "....Rich?" he caught a screamed "get out!!" from the bathroom and his eyes widened as he charged for the door and rammed his arm against it, forcing it open. "RICH!!" he yelled as he stumbled in, running to Richie's side and grabbing his arms to try and force him to stop.

In hysterics, Richie's mind saw this as an attack and started to struggle against Eddie, hitting him and pushing him but Eddie didn't let go. "no!! No, get off, get off!!"

"r-rich-Richie, snap out of it! It's me!!" he managed to grab both of Richie's wrists, pushing to pin him against the wall. "it's Eddie, Rich! You're okay!"

Richie's struggled died down and his breathing and shaking eventually did too. He stared forward with frightened eyes, his mouth still dripping with foamy blood. " I can f-f-feel it, Eddie. I can still...f-feel him in my m-mouth, I can--"

"Richie...." Eddie cut Richie off, shaking his head. "he's not here, okay? He's not here.... you won't ever have to feel him again." he looked into Richie's eyes and the other nodded slowly. "okay.....I'm going to....let go of your arms. And we're going to wash your mouth out, okay?" Richie nodded again and Eddie slowly let Richie's arms go, them dropping beside him. And *that* is what they meant when they called him a self-harm hazard.

" I don't know what happened...." Richie spoke low, a glass of saltwater in his hand. He sat on the closed toilet seat, Eddie leaning down beside him, cleaning his fa c e off with a wet rag. " I feel so stupid...."

"don't say that, Rich..." Eddie shook his head. "don't. You're not stupid. You're justdealing with your tragedy in whatever way your mind needs."

" I can't even fucking *brush my teeth* , Eds.... this motherfucker ruined my life...."

"and we're going to make him pay." Eddie looked up to Richie, face stern. "we'll make him pay for what he did."

" yeah.... yeah he's going to pay..." Richie nodded, face just as stern. "that's for damn sure...."

Night came faster than they really wanted. To tell the truth, none of them wanted to face Patrick, and they certainly didn't want Richie to go, but it seemed they had no other choice. Richie wouldn't stay home without a fight.

Eddie was tasked to stay behind with a walkie talkie and alert the police when they found him. At least with that, they could keep *one*

person Patrick was after safe. Bev was convinced this wouldn't go south, that this wasn't a trick to lure them away, but the others had their doubts. They just couldn't trust Belch and Vic, not after everything they've put them through. Even so, they agreed to go along with the plan. They agreed to put their trust and faith in the two bullies just for one night.

They met up with Belch and Vic at 12 pm on Nebolt street. None of them wanted to be back there. Even though they all knew it was dead, or at least sleeping, it was very unsettling to be back there. Stan rubbed at the still healing scar on his palm as they all stayed silent, staring on at the house. Maybe they all had some sort of PTSD.

"what the hell is he doing here?" Belch said, gesturing to Richie. "don't you losers think it's a pretty fucking stupid idea to bring the kid he's after?"

Richie glared up at the older teen. "I'm *going* . I *need* to. I need to see his stupid fucking face. I need to see him suffer."

Belch sighed, rubbing at his forehead. "fine, whatever, are we all here? We're ready to go?"

"is....is he in there....? " Stan pointed to the Nebolt house. It was a question they all wanted to know the answer to, but not one they were prepared for in the slightest. Having to go back in there would not be pleasant for any of them. They all practically stopped breathing as they waited for an answer.

Thankfully, the answer was, "no. Not there, the junkyard. I figured meeting here would be far enough." Vic spoke, gesturing forward as he turned and started to walk. "come on."

The others followed behind, thankful that it wasn't Nebolt , at least. Getting away from that house let a lot of stress off their shoulders, though they still felt uneasy about what waited for them at the junkyard.

A small walk later and they were there, at the entrance of the

junkyard. After hours, the gates were locked, but around back, there was a small opening in the fence. This was how the Bowers' gang got in at night. If Patrick was hiding out anywhere, it was surely here. But the problem was, why the fuck hadn't the police thought to look here? Where they even trying to catch Patrick, at this point?

The two older boys went in first, helping the kids in shortly after. It was dark, save for a few small lights on the fences, and it smelled almost worse than the sewers.

Mike took the talkie off his belt and spoke into it low. "we're in. Stand by."

"got it." Eddie's voice, just as low, spoke back through the speaker before the device was put back onto his belt.

"this way," Belch spoke quietly, leading them through a maze of garbage.

The further they walked, the more scared they got. Bill looked around for an escape route, Ben searched for weapons in case they needed to fight. They definitely had some sort of PTSD from everything they've been through.

Though Richie, on the other hand, looked stone cold. He wasn't showing any outward fear. Nevertheless, Bev kept a comforting and protecting arm around his shoulder as they walked.

Up ahead, they heard rustling and mumbling. They could only assume it was Patrick. Vic gestured for them to follow closely as they continued to walk toward the sounds.

As predicted, Patrick was there. He was kneeled down in front of his fridge, holding it shut as presumably the lock broke and whatever helpless creature he was attempting to kill in there was trying to escape. All while laughing low and maniacally and mumbling nonsense to himself.

The moment he saw Patrick, Richie's entire body seized up. He fought like mad to keep his emotions at bay, and clenched tight at his beating chest. Not now. He couldn't give the bastard the satisfaction

of seeing him break down.

“Hey!!” Belch yelled, breaking their cover. Patrick stopped what he was doing and sat there for a moment before standing up and turning around, face contorted in a sadistic grin. He looked like he hadn’t bathed in months. The animal he was torturing, a baby deer, burst out of the fridge as soon as Patrick let go, wailing as it ran off. Patrick didn’t seem to care. His focus was set, like a tracking beam, right back onto Richie. The hair on the back of his neck stood on end as Patrick licked his lips. “brought my little plaything to me, huh~?”

“fuck off, you crazy psychopath!” Vic yelled, causing Patrick to laugh. Bev tightened her grip protectively around Richie.

“oh. I guess not.... what a shame.”

Mike stepped away behind the others, speaking low into the talkie. “he’s here. At the junkyard.”

“okay... okay, I’m on my way now.”

Patrick jumped his attention to Mike, hearing the faint sound of Eddie on the other end. “Edward decided not to join the party, huh? What? Was he afraid I might be after his supple little ass, too~?”

Richie screamed loud, pulling away from Beverly’s grasp and charged for Patrick, swiftly kicking him in the crotch and sending him to the ground.

“Richie!” Beverly called after, but it was no use, Richie was overtop of Patrick, sending punch after punch into his face as he cried and yelled angrily . “fuck you! Fuck you, fuck you, fuck you!!!” all while Patrick laughed and choked “you son of a bitch!! I’ll kill you! You fucking ruined my life!!”

“Rich!” Bill called out, the others running to pull Richie off of Patrick. Richie struggled against them, but they all held onto him as he cried and continued to yell, “fuck you!!”

Vic and Belch walked forward as Patrick started to get up. “ heheh I like a boy who knows how to throw a punch~ you’re still such a sexy little wh --” Patrick was cut off by Belch’s fist coming in contact

with his face.

“shut the hell up, Hocksetter , you sick piece’a shit!!”

Patrick laughed, spitting up blood. “and what, are you two their bodyguards now?”

Belch grabbed Patrick by the collar, glaring daggers at him. “yes. We *are* .” he tossed Patrick against the fridge, knocking him unconscious.

Richie had calmed down, still sobbing but not as breathlessly, huddled in his friends’ comforting arms. Police sirens rang out over the hill and Vic sighed. “what do we do about this?” he gestured to Patrick. “they’re not going to be happy he looks like that.”

Belch looked back toward the kids, watching Richie’s shaking frame hold onto his friends for dear life and ran a hand through his hair. “well....I’ll....take the wrap for the kid.” the others looked to him and he sighed. “they’ll be sendin ’ whoever beat him up to jail for their own trials. I’ve been there before, and....well, this asshole deserved what he got, you don’t deserve to spend the night behind bars for this. So.....I’ll take this.”

Richie nodded toward Belch. “.....thank you.” he couldn’t believe his bully was taking the wrap for him. And *protecting* him. Maybe they weren’t so bad after all.

The cops came soon after and took the unconscious Patrick into custody, as well as Belch who, as he said, took the fall for Richie. The others were questioned and sent on their way with a warning for trespassing and going against police orders. Though, because this lead them to find the criminal, they wouldn’t be fined for it. Lucky them.

They met back up with Eddie and gave him the rundown of what he missed. Eddie felt horrible. He should have been there for Richie, but someone needed to stay behind and he was scared that, if he was there, Patrick would say something about his mom. He *definitely* didn’t want Richie hearing about that from *him* .

They all went their separate ways. Eddie didn’t have any excuse for

staying with Richie another night, and he could tell his mom was getting suspicious, so he decided to 'go home' instead. The others were worried, offering him to stay with them, but he declined. He'd be fine.

Eddie found himself outside of his home. It was dark and unsettling. There was police tape all around the porch and door, there was no way inside through the front. He sighed and walked around back.

Outside his bedroom window was a tree that overhanged the small roof at his windowsill. Richie climbed it every time he came over and snuck in. Eddie assessed the risk of climbing this tree. He wasn't a very good climber, but it didn't look dangerous, justnot very easy for someone like him. He decided he didn't really care. He needed to get into his room somehow.

Climbing the tree was very difficult, as expected. He slipped a few times and found his upper body strength wasn't that great, but that didn't stop him. He finally managed to get to the roof and pry his window open. Thankfully it was still open a crack.

He jumped in and looked around, a melancholy feeling drifting over him. He knew he couldn't stay here. It would haunt him too much to know what was downstairs. He packed up a few of his things, some bedsheets, blankets, clothes, school work, shoved everything into a duffle bag, tossed it out the window, and left. He loaded himself and the bag onto his bike and took one last look at his home before ridding off toward the hideout.

Eddie made himself a bed in the hammock, hunkering down for the night and possibly for a few more nights in the underground bunker. It was better than sleeping in his home.

That night, about 4 am three hours after returning home, Richie found himself in what would be the first night terror since the attack. Eddie did well to help keep them away, but now that he wasn't there, they came back quick.

He struggled in his bed, mumbling nonsense to himself, sobbing into his pillow. The visions of Patrick over top of him was so vivid and real, he woke up with a yell and deep breaths as he frantically looked around his room. He reached over and turned on his light, putting on his glasses quickly, the pain in his chest from putting them on barely even noticeable. He was alone. Patrick wasn't there. It wasn't real. He pulled himself into a ball and sat there for a moment before getting up quickly and putting on his coat. He didn't want to, but he couldn't stand the night terrors and he didn't want to be alone. He headed towards Eddie's house.

His heart sank and he almost fell trying to get off his bike. Police tape? Why was there police tape? Why was Eddie's house taped off, what happened?! He ran for the door "EDDIE!?" he yelled as he slammed his arm into the door. It wasn't budging. He kept slamming into the door. "EDDIE!!" he yelled more, breath hitching as there was still no response. It was so quiet behind that door.

Finally, after the third or fourth ram, the door flew open, sending Richie onto the ground. He grunted as he hit his head on the wooden floor, but didn't give it any attention. He stood up quickly, walking inside. "Eddie? Eds!! HEY!! Hey, ed--!" as he rounded the corner to the Livingroom, his heart stopped and he froze. The Livingroom was the same as it was before, aside from the missing body. Blood splatter all over the carpet and chair, writing on the walls, the R + E scrawled frantically. The only thing Richie could think of was that Patrick had escaped the police and murdered Eddie and his mom. That was all he could think of. Eddie was dead, he died in the night while Richie was busy having a fucking night terror.

He screamed in horror. " **EDDIIIEEEE!!!** "

Notes for the Chapter:

oh shit, another cliffhanger sorta. keeping this a secret from richie is really backfiring.

10. where did you sleep last night?

Summary for the Chapter:

Eddie realizes he has to come clean about what happened to his mom.

Notes for the Chapter:

this is...a lot shorter than I thought it would have been. i'm really sorry about that. I'm going to try to make the next one longer.

Eddie had slept in and he was late for school. He'd forgotten his alarm clock at home and since the clubhouse was underground, no light came in to tell him it was morning. It was dark and gloomy down there, and the hammock was not at all comfortable to sleep on. No back support and he almost fell out of it twice. His sleep that night was off and on, and as he stumbled into class, twenty minutes late, he had bags under his eyes and his clothes were all disheveled and hair a mess since he also forgot a hairbrush.

The entire class turned to the door as Eddie wandered in. The teacher was in the middle of her lecture, and he felt utterly embarrassed. Not only did he look like hell and feel like hell, but he was inexcusably late as well. Despite the look of concern the teacher gave Eddie's appearance, she scolded him.

"Edward, you don't show up for class for two days and then you show up late looking like this? What happened?"

The other students whispered. He overheard one say something about his mom and his heart sank. Of course , it was already on the news. He had to tell Richie before he found out a different way. "I, um " he frowned as he sat down at his desk. ".... I overslept, and....didn't have time to get ready...."

She sighed, worry still on her face. "see me after class, Edward. I'd like to speak with you." some students made taunting ' ooooooh ' sounds accompanied by laughter, prompting the teacher to shush

them. She got back to her lecture and Eddie sunk down into his desk. He could honestly die right now with how embarrassed he was.

Eddie fell asleep at his desk. He just couldn't help it, he was far too exhausted. His head laid in his arms and he snoozed peacefully. The teacher didn't bother waking him. She must have had pity for his situation. In all honesty, Mrs. Trumen was a very kind and understanding lady. He was lucky to have her for the first period, especially on a day like today. She saw his exhausted frame and took pity on him enough to let him completely miss the lecture to catch some needed snoozes.

Though, once class had ended, she gently shook his shoulder after all the other students had left. Eddie stirred , grunting slightly as he slowly sat up and rubbed his eyes. "mm. ..what ...?" he looked around, fuzzy memory coming back to him as he realized where he was. " shi -um, crap, did I....sleep through class ...?"

She smiled at him. " yes you did. You're lucky I'm understanding enough to let you." she pulled up a chair to his desk, sitting down on it to talk to him eye to eye. ".....Edward, I....heard what happened to your mom. I'm....so sorry, sweetheart...."

Eddie sighed and sat back, shrugging. "s'okay... Richie's more important right now...."

She frowned. "that's not true... Richard's situation, while it is just as tragic, it is not more important than the loss of your mother. You are allowed to be upset over her death, Edward. I'm sure your friend would understand-"

"Richie doesn't even *know* ..." he grunted as he blurted out.

".....you can't keep this a secret from him forever.... he will find out eventually, it's on the news already. And since it's tied to his case? It will be apart of his trial."

The trial. He forgot about the stupid trial. Of course, even with all the evidence, they couldn't just lock the bastard up and be done with it.

They had to have a fucking *trial* . And now both him and Richie were the victims. His mom's dead body would be displayed like a painting at an art gallery. He didn't want her to be shown like that. She may have been overbearing and overprotecting, but she was still his mom. He loved her. He *still* loves her. She was the only parent he had left.

He could feel his eyes watering and he quickly forced it down. No crying, not here, not now. "... I have to go to class...." he grumbled, getting up from his chair and packing his bag.

Mrs. Truman stood up, looking a bit more worried than she was before. "...Edward, where are you staying?"

".....what?"

"your house. It's a condemned crime scene, are you staying with a friend? Where did you sleep last night, Ed?" she could tell he didn't get much sleep. The realization that Eddie's home was a crime scene, and that he didn't have family in the area, struck her suddenly, making her worry he had become homeless.

"..... I have a bed. Don't worryokay ? I'm..." he sniffed, rubbing at his watering eyes as he started to walk away. "I'm fine...." he left the classroom, quick walking down the hall, trying to get to his next class in time.

Eddie tried to stay awake in his other classes. Thankfully, the third period was gym, so he had no other choice, and the physical activity helped to wake him up more. Bill was in his fourth, Social Studies, and as he saw Eddie enter the room, he frowned. "...Ed..."

"don't...." Eddie groaned as he sat. "I know I look like shit, okay? I'm fine, I justslept in."

"where did you e-even s-s-sleep last night?"

"the clubhouse," Eddie spoke low, opening his social studies book.

"f-for real, E-Eds? The c-clubhouse? You could have sta -stayed w-with any of u-us, but you ch -chose to stay in the club-clubhouse?"

Bill was quite frankly shocked. He didn't think Eddie, of all people, would be okay with sleeping in the clubhouse.

"....look, I can take care of myself, Bill. I appreciate the concern and all, but I'm-"

The door swung open as the receptionist from the front desk walked in. "Eddie Kaspbrak ?" everyone turned to him. What the hell did he do?

"um.....that's me..." he sat up slowly, raising his hand a bit. The woman looked toward him, gesturing her head toward the door. "you're needed in the office. Come with me."

Eddie looked to Bill for a moment before standing up and packing his stuff back into his bag to follow her.

As they walked down the hall, his mind raced with what could have possibly happened. Did he do something? Did he *not* do something? Was this about his absences , or maybe the principal wanted to talk to him about getting counseling?

As they stepped into the front office, he blinked as he saw Mrs. Tozier pacing in front of the desk. "...Mrs. Tozi -"

" Eddie !" she fast-walked over to him. " I . ..didn't know where else to go, I know you and Richie are close and have been spending a lot of time together and I felt I had no other choice but to come to you-"

"M-Mrs. Tozier, what's wrong, did...did something happen to Richie?" the way she was talking, panicked and fast, he could only think of the worst scenarios .

"Richie....Richie disappeared last night. I-I think he ran away or something, I don't know why or when, I just know when I went to check on him this morning, he was gone! Eddie, please, do you know where he could have gone?"

Eddie's face fell. His body went cold. Richie 'ran away' last night. No, he didn't run away. He did the same thing he did a few nights a week. He snuck out to visit Eddie in the night. He snuck out and found Eddie's house police taped off. He found out about what

happened in the worst way possible. Eddie swallowed hard, nodding slightly. "...yeah.... yeah, I do...." he grabbed his bag up and started to fast walk out the door.

"Edward Kaspbrak , you do not have permission-!" the secretary stood up at her desk.

"I need to go!! *Now!!* "

"wait...wait, Eddie, *where!?* " Maggie pleaded, following Eddie.

"my house." he ran out the door and hopped on his bike, speeding off down the road , not stopping as Maggie and the secretary ran out after him.

Eddie's house wasn't that far away from school if he rode his bike fast enough. His calves would be burning like hell by the end of it, but he didn't much care about that right now. He didn't much care about really anything besides making sure Richie was okay. God, if he saw the blood and writing.... he had a lot to apologize for.

Eddie practically rode his boke up the steps. He couldn't get off of it fast enough, stumbling and hopping through the cracked open door. The police tape was disheveled as well. Richie had definitely at least been here. "Richie!?" he frantically ran through his house, trying his best to ignore the rotting smell that still lingered mixed now with the metallic smell of dried old blood. No Richie downstairs, but he heard movement upstairs. He ran up the steps, yelling "Richie!!" as he tripped over each step.

As Eddie burst through his bedroom door, he found Richie in a ball on his bed, hugging one of his pillows. "Rich -"

" Eddie !?" Richie sat up quickly , turning to face Eddie. His face was red and wet. He looked like he had been crying all night.

Richie didn't hesitate to jump up and run to Eddie, practically knocking him over as he jumped into a tight hug. The two of them sobbed. "I'm s-so sorry, Richie, I'm s-sorry...." Eddie attempted through sobs. The two boys collapsed to their knees on the ground,

but kept their tight hold on each other, the both of them trembling.

“e-eds....spaghetti, I thought you were dead....” Richie managed with a crack in his voice.

“I’m s-sorry, Richie, I’m sorry, I’m s-sorry.... I-I didn’t....I didn’t want you to find out this way...”

He pulled his head up, trying to look at Eddie. “eds....eds, what do you mean, what....what *happened* here?”

Eddie stared into Richie’s eyes. He didn’t know how to say it.

“eds...please....please tell me what happened....”

“....m...my mom....” Eddie’s voice broke, shaking a bit more as tears ran down. “sheshe died... I found herwhen I left to ch -check up on her....”

“ Eddie” Richie brought Eddie back into a hug, holding him close. For once, he was on the opposite end of a panic attack. That’s not something he’d be happy about, especially when the one in his place was Eddie.

“.... I didn’t tell you because I don’t want you worrying about me.... you’ve been going through so much, Rich, I-I don’t want you to worry...”

“ Eddie don’t be stupid, man, come on...” he smiled a bit, giving a small chuckle. “Patrick has taken something away from both of us. we’re in the same boat, Eds. We’re in this together....” Richie pulled slightly from Eddie to stare into his eyes, a slight smile on his face. “.....you and me....”

Eddie nodded. “together”

11. a new start

Summary for the Chapter:

Eddie is finally forced to give up his pride and finds himself a temporary home.

Notes for the Chapter:

edit: FORGOT TO MENTION the 5000 hits milestone
fic is up! go read it here! [https://
archiveofourown.org/chapters/50960566?](https://archiveofourown.org/chapters/50960566?show_comments=true&view_full_work=false#comment_262337380)

[show_comments=true&view_full_work=false#comment_262337380](#)

Maggie wasn't far behind. She lost sight of Eddie, but she knew where she was going, Eddie's house wasn't that far from her own. She had heard about what happened to Eddie's mom but figured Richie already knew, so mentioning it to him didn't seem needed at all. Just like Eddie, she didn't want Richie to worry about anything. She always tried to keep it positive when talking to him. Talking about how his friend's mom was killed by his rapist wasn't the best idea, so she kept quiet about it. She had no idea Richie was kept completely in the dark about this.

Richie was rushed back home and Eddie had no other choice but to go back to school. He wanted so badly to sneak into Richie's house, but he knew his mom would be hovering all day to make sure Richie wouldn't attempt to escape again. He could go back to the clubhouse and just...try to catch up on some sleep, but that wasn't going to happen. The best to do at this point was to just go to school.

What was waiting for him, though, was a berate from the receptionist. It was like she didn't give a fuck about his situation. She had to have known what he's been through. What his *best friend* had been through, but she acted like he was just some kid who tried to skip out on school. He just stood in the lobby, head down as he half-listened to her lecture, occasionally uttering, "yes ma'am. I'm sorry, ma'am." this was ridiculous. He was missing class even more because of her.

School couldn't have gone by fast enough.

Eddie still pretended to be okay. Eddie still insisted he was safe, in a good spot, he would refuse to let his friend's family take him in. He didn't want to be a burden. He made a home out of the underground clubhouse, and for the next two days, it *was* home. He wished he didn't have his pride. He wished If someone would force him into a real home because at this point, he didn't even know if he could force himself alone. His friends, including Richie, would hang out as much as they could, but it was lonely. And cold. And uncomfortable. And there was no way to shower. He didn't like this.

Everyone was worried for him. His friends, his teachers, his friend's parents, everyone. That was the last thing he wanted. They shouldn't be worried about *him* , they should be focusing on *R ichie* . Despite everything, despite their talk in his bedroom, he still claimed that Richie was way more important than him. He wouldn't get over this any time soon

In the middle of the third day, Eddie was called into the office yet again. "Eddie Kaspbrak?" Eddie looked up from his half-asleep daze toward the ground. His eyes were sunken, his hair was messy and greasy, and his nose and eyes were red and sore, like he had been wiping them too many times and irritated them. the principle let Eddie know it was time to come into his office.

He sighed, grabbing up his bag and followed the man .

He was very confused when he opened the door and saw two business looking people and.....his first-period teacher? "....Mrs. Trumen?"

She gave him a sort of apologetic look with concern mixed in but didn't speak up. Instead, the pencil skirt and blazer wearing woman stepped forward and outstretched her hand. "it's nice to meet you, Edward. My name is Tricia and this is my partner Steven, we're with social services."

Eddie's face scrunched. Social services? Fucking *social services* ? What

the hell were they doing here, and honestly more importantly where the hell were they this entire time? “what the fuck took you so long?” Eddie spat out. The woman’s expression didn’t change. She probably got this a lot.

“Edward Kaspbrak !” the principle snapped.

“no! No, fuck that, my mom has been dead for over a week, where were you then? Where were you when my house was condemned and I became homeless!? I've been living in an underground clubhouse for *three days* , I haven’t showered and I've barely slept- my-my inhaler!” his shaking hands pulled his inhaler out of his fanny pack. He was starting to get worked up. “my *fucking* inhaler ran out two days ago and I can’t *afford* a new one because I'm just a child- I'm a god damned *child* and your bullshit system forgot about me until what? You *had* to check up on me because of the trial tomorrow?! **Fuck** that!” he tossed his inhaler onto the ground as he yelled ‘fuck’. Mrs. Trumen , gentle lady as she always was, put her hand on his arm and gave him a sympathetic look.

“Are you quite done, Edward?” the principal spoke, crossing his arms. Eddie grunted in response, looking down.

“...we understand your frustration, Mr. Kaspbrak , but we have been working to find your closest family members for a while. We wereunder the impression you have been staying with a friend, however, Mrs. Trumen here contacted us with concerns that you were homeless, and well.....you just confirmed that.” Eddie didn’t look back up. “.....Mrs. Trumen has.....been so kind as to offer her guest room for you, Mr. Kaspbrak.”

Eddie looked up to the teacher who had a small smile. His teacher wanted to take him in.... she was so concerned for him that she called Social Services *herself* and offered her place. Was this i t ? Was he finally being forced to give up his pride? “..... I don’t want anyone to worry about me...” he muttered.

The woman and man gave each other a confused look. “ I'msorry you feel that way, Edward, but.....you really don’t have a choice-”

“then I'll go!” Eddie looked up quickly. “I-I'll.....I'll accept if.....I *have*

to.” the two nodded and started getting the paperwork together. Mrs. Trumen looked relieved.

“ I promise I will make you feel at home and welcome.”

“Just sign here, ma’am.” the man said, placing some papers in front of her. She signed quickly. “okay, then that’s it.” he put away the papers. “Edward Kaspbrak , you are now *temporarily* in the foster program. Your foster mother is Mrs. Cathy Trumen , she will take care of you until we can contact your family.”

In other words: he was now officially an orphan.

“ I hope you don’t mind cats!” Cathy exclaimed as they pulled up to her home. It was...really close to Richie’s, actually. Just down the street. He could see his house. This would make it a lot easier to visit him.

“no, I....don’t mind,” he stated as he got out, grabbing his bags out of the back. They had permission from the police to gather all of Eddie’s things out of his old house. He had a few bags and some boxes. His friends told him they’d stop b y to help unpack. Mrs. Trumen was more than happy to let them.

He looked up at the house. It was pretty large. Bigger than his own. “come on inside!” she led him up the walkway and the steps. She seemed very happy. Giddy, almost. He was so thankful someone *finally* pushed him to accept help. He was so ready for a shower. “it’s just me and Coco. She’s a sweetheart, I’m sure you’ll get along.” she opened the door and a small fluffy brown cat mrowed and jumped off the couch to greet them. The interior was decorated very femininely. Pinks and whites were the theme, there were handmade quilts on the couch and chairs, and a small tv in the corner. He stepped in and looked around before looking at Cathy.

“umwhere should I....put my stuff?”

“there’s a guest room upstairs. First door on your right,” she stated as she picked up her cat and took her into the kitchen. He nodded and

headed up the steps.

The room wasn't as big as he was used to. Or was it the larger bed that made the room look smaller? Either way, squeezing his things in here was going to be a pain. But it was a bed. It was a place to stay. And a shower.... god he needed a shower.

"Mrs. Trumen ?" Eddie wandered down the stairs and into the kitchen where Cathy was getting Coco's food ready for her.

"yes, Eddie?"

"um may I....take a shower?"

She smiled at him, nodding. "of course you can, the bathroom is to the left of the guest room."

Thank god. He didn't hesitate to quick walk back up the stairs and into the bathroom. The hot water felt like heaven. Scrubbing the grease out of his scalp was amazing. He let himself linger long enough for the hot water to start turning cold. After that, the doorbell rang, and Eddie knew it was his friends to help him unpack. He made his way back downstairs as Cathy was opening the door.

It was his friends, and they filed in. Eddie's face lit up as he bound toward them. "hey, guys!"

"Hey, Ed!" Ben exclaimed.

"Eduardo! Congrats on the new Casa!" Richie spoke in a very butchered accent, an arm coming up to pull around his shoulders.

Eddie leaned onto the arm a bit more than what was really prompted. " heheh ~ thanks."

"you finally gave in, huh?" Mike spoke, smiling.

"yeah, d-dude, what was d-d-different about this one?"

"is it because she's hot? You can tell us, buddy." Richie grinned and Eddie's face lit in a blush.

“r-rich!”

Mrs. Trumen , who was standing behind them, giggled. “Richard, how many times do I have to say? I'm way out of your league.” she joked, rolling her eyes. Though she was very happy to see that Richie seemed to be doing better. Or at least able to joke around and have fun. As much a handful as Richie Tozier was, she'd rather him be a handful then quiet and sad. It was very relieving.

Richie wasn't lying when he said she was hot, however. Cathy was a young woman, fresh out of school, 23 years old. She was petite, had a nice curve to her figure, beautiful blond hair, and big green eyes. She was enough to make these pubescent boys' stomachs turn. Except for Eddie. Sure she was pretty, but he didn't think anything more than that. He had no intrusive fantasies while watching her in class. Now the PE teacher, Mr. Brown... there were a lot of confusing feelings there.

“I'll start making dinner while you kids unpack. I hope you all will be able to stay, I'm making my famous griddle fried lemon chicken~” she smiled sweetly and started to walk to the kitchen. The boys didn't try to hide the fact that they were watching her walk away rather closely. Beverly rolled her eyes and smiled at Eddie, the two of them really the only ones not in a trance. She knew. The look on her face said that enough. She definitely knew.

“s-sure Mr-Mrs . Trumen , we can st -stay.” Bill spoke for all of them and the rest just nodded and grunted in response.

Beverly scoffed at them with a grin. “okay, common, Eddie.” she grabbed Eddie's arm and pulled him from Richie's grasp, almost making Richie fall over. He stood back up and adjusted his glasses. “let's go start unpacking and let these boys fantasize alone.”

“ah! N-no, we're cool!” Richie spoke, following. The others followed as well.

“y-y-yeah, we're good.” Bill sputtered.

“we're not doin' anything.” Mike defended.

“yeah, just, um, standing around,” Stan spoke up.

“what’s for dinner again?” Ben asked, obviously not paying attention.

Bev chuckling under her breath, looking toward Eddie with a definitely knowing smile. Yeah, she knew.

With Cathy’s permission, they moved the bed toward the window, making more room for Eddie’s things as the bed in the middle of the room broke it up into much smaller pieces. There was a desk at the foot of the bed that they placed all of Eddie’s books on top and stored all his backup meds, gloves, masks, ointments, band-aids, every medical-related thing Eddie had in the drawers. They talked Eddie into letting them throw out some of the meds since he didn’t need them, they were fake anyway, but some he refused to get rid of. Like his arthritis pills. He does sometimes get cramps in his hands, so that has to be real! And his Cataract prevention medication. He already needed bifocals; he could just *feel* his eyes getting worse! And Richie, you should take these too, your eyes are worse than mine!

The others knew these weren’t real things, but Eddie didn’t care how much they told him they weren’t, he insisted on needing them. At this point, he was just holding on to the past, something that would keep his mom alive, in a sense. He didn’t want to let her go.

They got almost completely done when Cathy called them down to dinner and they raced downstairs. For once, Cathy was glad to have bought a large dining room table and thankful she hadn’t gotten rid of it yet. Everything happens for a reason.

As they ate, they talked about school and the shows they watch. Cathy let the kids talk amongst themselves and only listened.

After dinner, they finished unpacking, and the majority of them went home. Richie was the only one who stayed longer since his house was right down the street.

The two sat in the Livingroom after the rest left. It was silent for a moment before Richie spoke up. “....Eds....you know.....his trial is

tomorrow.” he played with his hand as if he were nervous. Eddie’s face fell.

“...I know...” he nodded.

“I don’t.....know if I can face him again.” his voice cracked

Eddie reached out, grabbing Richie’s hand. “Rich.... remember what you said, right? You and me... we’re in this together. I’ll be thereright beside you, and if you need totake my hand, or hold onto me...” his face fell red. “do whatever you need, Rich. I’m here for you...”

Richie smiled, though it was a bit of a dull smile, It was still genuine and appreciative. He leaned in and gave Eddie a close hug. “thank you, Spaghetti.....”

Notes for the Chapter:

personally, I am not looking forward to writing the trial. I’ve been putting it off for a bit, but it’s next chapter, and I am not ready. mainly because I don’t know much about legal things, as you can probably tell. hopefully it won’t be too bad.

also, I thought about all we have left in the fic, and really.....it’s not too far away from being finished. maybe like 3 or 4 more chapters. I feel like I’ve just started this thing, man.

12. the trial

Summary for the Chapter:

the trial is long and emotionally exhausting. Richie's friends and family learn a lot more about what happened and Richie learns resentment and hatred for a lot of people.

Notes for the Chapter:

holy shit this is long, get ready. 9 pages, 4,000 ish words, the longest chapter yet. it's an emotional rollercoaster.

there's a bit in here where it goes back and forth between present and flashback. I tried to word it in a way that made it make sense. the parts that are both bolded and indented within the flashback parts are Richie's present-day voice explaining the events. hopefully it makes sense.

there's a few trigger warning breaks for graphic depiction of sexual assault/rape.

Richie ended up spending the night. He just didn't want to go home, and the later it got, the more afraid he was of walking home alone, or even of Eddie walking him home and having to go back alone. Patrick might have been caught, but he was still paranoid. He didn't ever want to be alone outside again, especially not at night or close to dark. And *especially*, especially near the kissing bridge. Honestly, he'd rather avoid that place altogether, no matter the time of day or who he was with. There was still dried blood on the rocks underneath, and even some on the rails themselves. There was probably some dried semen, too. It was all just too soon and fresh to even think about.

Cathy didn't mind at all. She was just happy to not be alone in her small house, even if it were temporary. She knew she wouldn't be considered a 'mom' to Eddie in any sense, but she was at least happy

to be a caregiver. One that would treat him the way he deserved to be treated all along. Oh, she knew how Eddie's mom was. Everyone did. This was a small town, you'd be deaf not to have heard. All the pills, the scare tactics, the hours-long visits to the hospital for minor things, the fake sicknesses.... Eddie was a paranoid hypochondriac and it was all his mother's doing. She'd hope the relatives he inevitably goes to stay with will be better. For now, though, she would try to help alleviate some of those stresses. Starting with his 'broken' arm. No one believed his arm had really been broken, losers club aside. And even if it did, it's been more than enough time to heal.

"....after the trial, Eddie, we should go to the hospital and--"

"I'm not sick." Eddie's head perked up from his bowl of cereal as he quickly spoke. It was the next morning, a few hours from the trial. Cathy managed to call in a sub so she could be there for Eddie and Richie, even if it were in the crowd seating. She hoped this wasn't an open courtroom where just about anyone could go to watch. If it were, there wouldn't even be room to stand. After all, Darry was a small town, it didn't see many serial murder rapists. Henry's trial was the same. The first day of court was open, and the room was filled completely. They learned their lesson and closed it after that. Hopefully they will take the easier route and just close the court outright. "i-I'm not. I promise. I was just...sniffing because of the cold air outside."

She sighed a bit. "...no, Eddie, I know you're not sick. I was going to say we should go to the hospital so they can remove your cast." she gestured to the, now covered in dirt, grime, Richie's blood from the blood oath, probably greywater – he didn't even want to begin to think about that –and the leper's jet black goopy vomit – again did not even for a second want to think about that.

Eddie looked down at his cast. Yeah, this thing had been on his arm all summer. His doctor told him it should be ready to be taken off at the end of August. It was now almost mid-September. It was overdue. He nodded. "oh, r-right, yeah, my cast...."

Richie eyed the cast over his cereal bowl. "you finally getting that thing removed? It's like a part of you now, man, I don't know if I'd be

able to recognize you without it!” Richie was right. It was a part of him. It had been through so much with them. Their entire fight with Pennywise, all summer, it had so much history and so many memories etched into the fabrics, both literally and figuratively. He skimmed his fingers over the large ‘LOS(V)ER’ written on the side. “.....yeah....but I’m ready to have my arm back.”

Richie’s mom had picked him up from Mrs. Trumen’s house to get him ready for the trial, but Richie really didn’t want to leave. He felt a lot safer around Eddie, calmer, less susceptible to have his mind wander to dark places. He knew Patrick’s eyes would be on him the entire time. He knew Patrick would make remarks toward him during the trial. He knew he had to recall everything that happened to him in order to give his testimony. He knew Patrick himself would take the stands, and he’d have to listen to him speak about the allegations. He knew Patrick would get off on recalling the events. And then.....Eddie’s mom. Fuck, he forgot about Eddie’s mom... Eddie would have to listen to the bastard talk about cutting her up, he’d have to testify, himself. They were truly in this together.

Before the trial, Maggie brought Richie to the eye doctor. It was his appointment to get contact lenses. He hadn’t worn his glasses all that much the entire time; only when he really needed to see. He still couldn’t bring himself to wear them. His self-esteem was shot after the incident, and as silly as it sounded, the thought of being ‘fuckin ugly’ made him feel like shit. *You idiot..* Richie thought to himself as he sat at the mirror in the doctor’s office, practicing putting in his contacts. He stared dull-faced at his reflection. *would looking hot to that asshole be any better?* No. It wouldn’t be, but it was how his mind worked right now.

It was a closed trial, thank god. The fancy lawyer his mom had hired was there to greet him and give them the rundown. How to speak, how to address the judge, all that boring legal stuff. He glanced over at the defendant’s table. Eddie was there. Alone. Mrs. Truman was sitting in second to front row of the crowd seats. He didn’t have a lawyer. They would probably just appoint him a crappy one. He deserved to have a good lawyer.

“....could you be Eddie’s lawyer too?” Richie kinda cut the guy off. He wasn’t really paying attention anyway.

The lawyer glanced toward Richie’s mother; the two stealing looks before he looked back to Richie. “....that....would be up to your mother, Richard. I would have to charge a little extra.”

“Mom...?” Richie put on a pathetic face. He’d hope his mom had enough empathy for the two of them to be able to say yes. It wasn’t like they were strapped for cash.

She sighed, running a hand through her hair. She couldn’t possibly say no. The two boys have been through so much. She nodded. “yeah...yeah, that’s fine.”

“ah, alright, um....” the lawyer took his bifocals out of his pocket. “I’ll....have to take a moment to look over his case...” he sighed. “you’re not giving me much time, Richard.” he smiled slightly toward the boy. “but I promise I will do the best I can for the both of you.” the man walked off, grabbing Eddie’s case files making his way out of the courtroom to give it a quick read through.

They were there pretty early, but what else did they have to do? Richie sat himself down beside Eddie but the two sat in silence, both dreading what would come that day. Somewhere in the middle of their silent sitting, Eddie’s hand reached over and laced with Richie’s. They sat, hand in hand, the rest of the time.

“We have a lot here.” Richie’s lawyer, now introduced as Mr. Franklyn, spoke low as he approached the defense table. Maggie had joined the two boys somewhere along the way. “we have enough to convict this kid with the highest charges.....but I know for a fact they’re going to plead insanity. It might be hard to convince the jury he was of sound mind while doing...” he looked down at the two files in hand, Richie’s and Eddie’s. He finished reading through Eddie’s and decided to do a refresher on Richie’s in his downtime. “....really any of this.”

Richie shrugged rather nonchalantly. He glanced over Mr. Franklyn’s

shoulders as he saw Patrick's parents walk into the room. They seemed.....upset. Sad. It pissed him off. They weren't raped and their mother wasn't murdered. What happened to them? Their son had decided to molest a child and kill another child's only parent? Boo-fuckin-hoo. They shouldn't get to be sad. "I honestly don't care what he is convicted of. As long as he's gone for a long time," he spoke loud enough for Patrick's parents to hear, and they glanced over, expression a lot sorrier. They had all the chances in the world to get Patrick mental help. Everyone knew how.....not right that boy was. But they didn't. They chose not to, and now this happened. He didn't forgive them.

"beep beep, Richie...." Eddie muttered, tightening his grip onto Richie's hand. He knew what Richie was doing. Richie sighed and continued, now at a not so loud volume.

"No offense, but.....once I graduate, I don't ever plan on coming back here." then he remembered the blood oath, and the scar on his palm stung. Unless Pennywise came back in 27 years. He had to remind himself. *We promised Bill we'd come back and kill IT for good. I can't go against that promise.* But the adults would never know that, anyway.

Mr. Franklyn glanced at Richie's mother who just shrugged, then back to Eddie. "Edward? How do you feel on the matter?"

"I...." he looked to Richie, then back behind their lawyer to Patrick's parents, then to the jury, then the lawyer. "I feel....the same.... I just want.....him gone."

He nodded and thought for a moment. "okay, then We will shoot for the max insanity sentence. They'll try to shoot for the lowest, no doubt. That sound good?"

They just wanted this over with. They just wanted to never see his face again. They wanted to get back to a normal life, or as normal as they could get at this point. Richie nodded. "perfect."

People started piling in soon. There wasn't many, just who was allowed access to the case. Looking back, the two boys saw their friends had shown up, sitting in the back rows, some of them with their parents in tow. Bill waved and Richie gave a small smile before

turning back around when the doors in the front opened and out came Patrick. His heart stopped and his attention went back down to his hand in his lap and he absentmindedly held Eddie's hand as tight as he could.

It hurt, but it wasn't unbearable, so Eddie didn't say anything. If it helped Richie to squeeze the life out of his hand, so be it.

Patrick had his hands cuffed behind his back and two guards on either side of him, leading him to the accused table which was way too close to theirs for Richie's comfort. Why did he choose to sit on the side closest to Patrick's table? And of course, he was set on the side closest to them.

Although Richie didn't look up from his lap, he could still feel them. He felt the burning in his skin that only Patrick's eyes could do. He knew for a fact they were glued to him the second he entered the room, staring holes onto him like laser eyes.

Patrick's face was a bit bruised and his cheek was swollen from the beating Richie gave him the other day, but he didn't seem fazed by it. He grinned as he was sat down, head still turned to stare at Richie. "hey, baby, you miss me?"

Richie tensed up, eyes shutting tight. This was already too much and they hadn't even started yet. Patrick's lawyer shushed him. The judge was about to come through to start the trial.

They rose when the judge came in and then sat only when he told them to. The two sides discussed with the judge on how they wanted to plea, and that was it. The case was on.

Richie was called to the stand first. With his hand on the book, he vowed to not lie, and the accused lawyer stepped up to ask his invasive questions. He didn't even want to look at the man. How could he stand there and defend someone like Patrick Hocksetter?

"Richie Tozier- may I call you Richie?"

"...I don't really care..." Richie practically mumbled, head staring at

the microphone in front of him. The trial was being recorded for the media, with Richie's permission. He just didn't care anymore. If this stupid town wanted to get all up in his business, so be it. They already knew what happened to him, anyway. Eddie was asked as well, but he just agreed with whatever Richie said. Something nagged at him that he was only agreeing out of pity.

"Alright, Richie, I'm going to need you to explain everything to us, can you do that for me?"

Richie shrugged. "sure."

The man nodded. "good. Tell us how this happened. Where were you before, where were your friends?"

Richie sat back in the chair and thought. "well....as you *might* know, I was kinda forced to drink five beers after everything, so memories are...fuzzy.... not the memories that count, but...." he shrugged. "I think we were at....our clubhouse. I had to leave early for.....some reason, and I elected to leave on my own. I stopped at-" he cut himself off as he remembered suddenly. ".....The kissing bridge."

The man nodded. "and what were you doing at the kissing bridge? Were you maybe...." he shrugged. "meeting a specific person? ...Patrick, perhaps?" Patrick's grin widened behind the man and he licked his lips predatorily.

Richie's eyebrows furrowed at the implications. ".....are you trying to suggest I agreed to this? Well, I didn't. Why would I want to--" his voice hitched in his throat and his eyes darted to Eddie who was looking down, then to his friends, some looking toward him with worry and sadness on their faces and some, mainly Stan, looking off to the side with pure rage, arms crossed. He could tell Stan wanted to stand up and scream at the guy to fuck off.

"of course not, Richie, of course not. Please continue, then. Why did you stop at the kissing bridge?"

Richie shook his head. "I....can't remember...." *liar. You made an oath, dumbass.* "it's.....all blurry... I just.....remember what happened....under the bridge." he was asked to recall those events the

best he could, and he mentally prepared himself to relive all those memories.

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With his eyes closed and heart pounding out of his chest, he spoke.  
“.....he made me take my clothes off....”

=====

"take your clothes off." Patrick grinned, backing up slightly to get a better view of the show.

“....that’s pretty....fuckin’ gay, dude....” Richie attempted a still slurred comeback, trying to distract the boy from wanting a striptease, but that only made him angrier. Bad idea.

He pulled out the blade once again, threatening him with it. “I said strip *now* , *faggot!!* ”

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Richie twitched as the memories came back. "then he, um.....he-he made me put my....overshirt back on because he said it made me look like-"

=====

"a sexy little whore." he chuckled heavily before his eyes trailed up to his face and his expression went cold.

*"but my glasses ....they ...."*

"make you look fucking ugly." he yanked the glasses off his face, tossing them as far as he could throw them, into the river.

*"after he ..... threw me into the gravel, he made me....get on my knees, and-"*

“open wide, pretty boy~”

“sh-sh-shi—mmm!!” he didn’t have time to prepare before he had a mouth full of hocksetter dick.

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richie could feel his entire body tense up. suddenly, his mouth felt full and his throat stung. "um...." he cleared his throat, looking around the room. it was quiet. everyone was listening. his mother's hands were over her mouth, and she was crying. Eddie was still looking toward the ground and Stan was still pissed off. maybe even more so. the rest of the guys averted their eyes, mike leaning over in the seat, and Bev had tears in her eyes, though he'd never know the full reason why.

on the other side sat Patrick's parents, obviously distressed, but not because of him. they were just upset that their son did this. get over it. behind them was Belch and Vic. Belch had spent two nights in jail for what Richie did to Patrick. he never would have thought he'd be thankful for his bully. that was about everyone who was there, save for the tv cameras currently broadcasting this entire thing to the rest of the town.

everyone was waiting for him, so he continued. "he.....he forced himself in my mouth. over and....and over. it hurt." he grabbed his throat, tears starting to flow down his cheeks. "I can still- I can still feel it.... I- I can still f-f-feel....--" his voice cracked and Franklyn stood up.

"Your honor, is....this really all necessary...? for god's sake, my client's not in the position to--"

"no...." Richie cleared his throat and sniffled. "no, I....I'm okay. you have to know what happened, right?" he shrugged.

the judge nodded. "you may continue, young man. but take your time..."

Richie sighed deep and long, eyes going shut again to remember what came next. things were jumbled and mixed in his mind at this point.

"after he pulled out....I vomited."

=====

Richie turned, hands planted into the dirt, and vomited violently twice. He sobbed, groaning from the pain in his throat both from the punishment and upchuck.

***"then he made me wash my mouth out with the river water."***

Patrick made a disgusted noise. "you're lucky that didn't turn me off. Now get up and clean your mouth out."

***"he threw me into the rocks again. I'm pretty sure that one broke a few bones. and then he started to carve ..... m-my stomach..."***

"ahhh! Ffffuck!!" Richie gasped, looking down. Patrick was sitting on his legs to pin them down as he carved a P into his flesh. "w-w-what the fuck-"

" *hold fucking still !*" Patrick pointed the blade of the knife toward Richie's face. "if you try anything, this knife is going straight into your *dick* , you got that!?" Richie didn't hesitate to nod quickly. His head flung back, practically giving himself another concussion as the blade painstakingly started to etch out the rest of the letters. He thought, with the P, he'd just be writing Patrick, but it seemed to go on forever. The pain was unimaginable and Richie sobbed, biting down hard onto his own arm to stop himself from gritting his teeth. It felt like ages before he finished, grinning down to behold his work.

The carving read 'property of Patrick'. He also carved 'little whore' into his left pelvis.

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what Patrick said after that.....Richie couldn't repeat it. he definitely couldn't repeat it while Eddie was in the room. the implications....

so he skipped that part. and what came after....

"that's when he--" he paused. his body was shaking. his voice shook just as much. "he put his dick in me..."

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***" I tried pushing away...."***

Richie's back arched, attempting to recoil away, his body wanting so badly to reject the forceful thrusts. He tried fighting back, pushing, hitting, anything to get the fuck away from this situation.

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"it f- *fucking* hurt.... so much more than my throat...or the cuts in my stomach....or anything." suddenly, he could feel that, too. he squirmed in his seat as he felt the phantom thrusts. "....he didn't pull out.... he finished....inside.... and then he beat me up."

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"you know what we do to little whores after we fuck them senseless?" Patrick's voice rang out, but Richie didn't look up. He knew all too well what was coming next. "we beat them bloody."

The first shoe collided into his stomach, Then the next into his chest. A fist came in contact with his face, then another, breaking his nose. Then another shoe to the groin, feeling a popping sensation in his balls that couldn't have been anything good, and a stomp to his ribs sent more cracking under the pressure. he went numb. The pain was mixed, every inch of him hurt.

***"and that's when he made me drink the beers."***

"chug it!" Richie's hazy eyes looked up to Patrick, confused, head spinning, just barely being able to comprehend anything at this point. "I don't want you remembering anything, so chug the damn beer, *faggot* !"

Why the fuck not? Maybe this would take some of the pain away. Or make him drunk enough to blackout. Why would he argue about not remembering this? Sure, remembering would mean he could take this shit to court and convict the bastard, but the carving in his stomach would be enough to do that all on its own. Patrick might be crazy, but he's not that smart.

Patrick ended up making him chug five beers before taking off back into the woods, taking Richie's clothes with him.

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"....and that's it...." he shrugged. "that's.....that's the full....story....from what I can remember, anyway...."

the man nodded. "no further questions."

and Richie was let off the stands.

they deliberated for a while. argued, showed evidence, presented his rape kit images. pictures of his naked body, thankfully censored in the crotch area, were displayed. the carvings, the stab wounds, the dark bruising on his spine and ribs. Richie checked out after a while, not really paying attention. he just let his head hang as he shut the entire world off.

Eddie took the stands after a while. they questioned where he had been and why it took him four days to discover his mom's body. he told them he was staying with Richie at the hospital, and leaving to and from for school. They asked him where he stayed after Richie had left the hospital, and he hesitated before telling them he slept in the clubhouse for a few days before social services assigned him a foster home. His time on the stands was shorter than Richie's, but it was just as hard to listen to. Eddie was distraught. He didn't like talking about the way his mom was cut up, or the blood on the walls. Almost immediately after Eddie, Patrick was put up, and Richie was not looking forward to hearing what he had to say.

"Patrick Hocksetter, let's get one thing straight. You *admit* to the rape of Richie Tozier and the murder of Sonya Kaspbrak, correct?"

Patrick shrugged, grinned. "yeah, I did it. How could I not? The fuckin faggot's so cute.... ain't that right, Eddie?"

Richie twitched and Eddie glared at Patrick. The judge slammed his

gavel down a few times. “Mr. Hocksetter, that’s enough. Stick to the questions and don’t address the Defendants.”

Patrick gave a small chuckle. “whatever you say, *your honor*. ”

The judge nodded toward Franklyn. “you may continue.”

“thank you, your honor...” he cleared his throat. “what does the writing on the wall mean, Patrick?” he gestured to a picture of Eddie’s wall, blood splatter spelling out “stay away from Richie”, “he’s mine, Eddie” and “R + E” scrawled all around.

Patrick’s grin widened. “he’s mine. Richie’s mine. I marked him, and, well.....I wanted to make sure *Eds* knew to keep away.” he glanced over toward the two.

“what does R + E mean?”

“that’s something you should ask *Richie*. It’s what he was carving into the *kissing bridge* when I found him.” Richie froze. This was it. He was about to be outed by this fuckin lunatic.

On the other end, Eddie’s heart began to pound.

“now....if I had to *guess*I’d say that means ‘Richie and Eddie’, ain’t that right, babe~?”

“ *hocksetter* .” the judge warned, reminding him to not address the others. Patrick rolled his eyes.

“right.” he shrugged. “that’s my theory, anyway. Which is why I.....cut the boy’s mom up. Would’a cut *him* up, too, but.....he never came back home. Lucky him, huh?”

The realization that Eddie would have died if he didn’t have a fight with his mom and refuse to go home....struck him like a brick. If he didn’t decide to tell his mom to fuck off and didn’t insist on staying with Richie....he would have been dead right now. Eddie had resented himself for being so harsh to his mom, and for their last words being ones of evil intent, but.....now he wasn’t so sure about his feelings for the situation.

Patrick's interrogation lasted a little longer after that, mostly having him retell how it all happened, but his was in more....gruesome detail.

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"his mouth was so hot and wet.", "he looked so sexy in that shirt.", "his tiny dick stood up like a Christmas tree.", that was a lie. He never got hard. He never once enjoyed any of it. "I fucked his tight ass good and hard. He was so into it, his little faggy moans were so fuckin *hot* ." another lie. He never moaned. At least he didn't think he did. Now he was second-guessing himself.

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Patrick's words stabbed him like little tiny knives to the chest. He couldn't stand this. Why was he being allowed to describe it this way? Why didn't anyone intervene?

"mother fucker...." Eddie mumbled under his breath. Richie glanced over toward the other and saw the hatred on his face. His eyes were watering and he bit down on his bottom lip, presumably to keep him from saying anything out loud. Now it was Richie's turn to grab *his* hand....and he was trembling as he reached over and laced their fingers. He could feel Eddie's tenseness loosen up and he smiled. The rest of the world didn't matter at this moment. He shut it all out once more.

The day was long. Long and mentally exhausting. Vic and Belch were put on the stands to testify for or against Patrick, both of them choosing to back up the kids on this. They were thankfully done with siding with this asshole. Belch was asked why he beat Patrick up in the junkyard, and he told them he got what he deserved for what he did to the kid. He was still insistent on covering for Richie, and Richie was still so damn grateful for that.

They had a short recess for deliberation, at which the kids., accompanied by their parental figures, left momentarily to have a quick – albeit very late - lunch. though the adults sat at a separate

table, they still watched the kids closely.

They had subs at a local shop next-door to the courthouse. The kids avoided talking about the trial, or about what they learned that day, but Richie could tell....they were acting a little different. They looked at him differently. Even Eddie did. His friends would never treat him the same again. Not after learning exactly what had happened to him.

the jury came back with their conviction soon after, and it was plain to see, after all the evidence and testimonies, Patrick was criminally insane. They gave him the highest sentence they could, sending him to the same mental hospital Henry was sent to not too long ago. Two criminally insane kids in one year. That was a lot for a small town like Derry.

Richie watched as they whisked Patrick away, his expression dark. He could hear Patrick's mom sob in the background, and he wanted to punch her for even thinking about being *upset* , after hearing everything he did. She was *upset*. Fuck her. Fuck Patrick. Fuck the accused's lawyer for even a second thinking he could have wanted to screw Patrick. Fuck the system that abandoned Eddie, fuck the police who dared even *think* his friends would do this to him and frame Patrick. Fuck everyone.

Richie's mom had to go to work that night for a meeting. His dad was working late as well. He was alone. They left him *alone* after everything that happened that day. He could tell his mom saw him differently as well. She didn't even look at him the entire ride home. Fuck her too.

His dad had just restocked his booze cabinet the other night. Richie knew the combination lock's code.

Richie emptied the entire cabinet, along with two packs of cigarettes and two blunts that night.

Notes for the Chapter:

how did you like having a long-ass chapter for once?
I'm not sure I'll be doing this again, but it was nice

being able to write something so long!

if you liked it, or even if you didn't like it, please leave feedback in the comments!! even if its a "nice chapter!", feedback is very helpful and motivational for me! I love reading everyone's comments, and I always comment back! let's start a discussion!

how do you guys think this fic will end? we have about 3-4 chapters left (maybe even 2, im still not sure), and I'd love to see your theories! what will happen to Eddie? will Richie and Eddie ever confess before it ends? let's start a discussion!

13. Richie Tozier, drink your water!

Summary for the Chapter:

Stan deals with a drunk Richie and Eddie gets a surprise.

Richie laid in his downstairs bathtub surrounded by empty bottles of various alcoholic beverages and discarded cigarette packets. The tub was empty and dry, but he was naked as if he thought he was taking a nice hot bath. There was an ashtray on the side of the tub with an entire pack's worth of butts scrunched and lain into it. Some of the butts never made it to the tray, and they were put out on the sides of the tub and left to fall wherever. This left the tub littered with ash and discarded butts all around Richie's body.

he clutched a bottle of rum to his chest like a teddy bear, his eyes staring at the carvings on his stomach. They were scared over but still legible. They'd never heal, they were too deep. He'd forever have a constant reminder of the events literally etched into his skin for the rest of his life. They say you forget everything when you leave Derry, but what happens when you can never truly forget? What happens when you have something attached to your body as a forever reminder?

The skin was 3d and lighter than the rest of his body. He ran the tips of his fingers over the letters , reading them over and over. 'property of Patrick' 'little whore', 'property of Patrick' 'little whore' , 'property of --' he grimaced before shakily sitting up and downing the rest of the rum. he tossed the empty bottle at the wall of the tub, it shattering and raining shards all over his legs and feet. He'd probably get cut up a bit, but he didn't care. He pulled his legs to his chest and he felt his eyes tear up. He lit another blunt, desperately trying to forget. At least for a moment.

Richie ended up passing out in the tub and when he woke, about an hour later, his legs stung and he winced as he sat up to look. He had shards of glass stuck in the skin and he was bleeding quite a bit. He

started to pull some of the smaller shards out, huffing and grunting as he did. He managed to get four small shards out before giving up and standing to stumble out of the tub. Flopping over the side, he stood up, almost toppling over a few times and steadying himself on the sink. The world was spinning, he was drunk and high and it fucked with his mind. He looked around the room and cackled sloppily, seemingly laughing at nothing before squirming to pull on pants, no underwear, and half putting on a shirt. He grabbed the last bottle of booze - half a bottle of whiskey - and pocketing the last two cigarettes as he stumbled out the door.

His parents were still not home. They were still working. It was now 8 pm and Richie didn't want to be alone. Eddie was at a new house, he didn't even know if there was a way into his room from the outside, so he set off out the door for Stan's, dragging his bloody and glass infested leg behind him as he walked.

Stanley was getting himself ready for bed. He had school in the morning, after all, he was lucky his parents let him stay home for Richie's trial. Although he kind of wished he hadn't. He had suspicions of what happened to Richie, given the way they found him and what would set him off, but he never in a million years wanted to hear the exact details. He felt like an asshole for thinking they would have been way better off not knowing. He felt like the world's worst friend for thinking he'd never look at Richie the same way again after learning how Patrick—he shouldn't think about that. Richie was still his friend, broken or not, hurt or not, innocent or not. None of them were innocent anymore, and Richie was even less so, but did any of that even matter? He was still Richie, and despite what happened to him, Stan needed to not treat him any differently or he'd never get better. Richie deserved for his friends to still see him as the same. Richie deserved for the world to not completely change because of this incident. Nothing was different. Richie was still Richie. They needed to act as if they were still ignorant of the events that happened.

All of this was contemplated while Stan showered and brushed his teeth that night. He had already made up his mind to not change anything about the way he interacted with Richie as he made his way

into his bedroom and turned off his light. He had already decided his feelings toward Richie would not change no matter what when a tap was heard at his window.

He figured it was just a bird or a branch from the tree outside. But then another came. And another. Stan sat up quickly and almost shrieked as he saw Richie's shadowed figure tapping at his window. Stan's house was one story so thankfully Richie didn't have to drunkenly climb a tree. He stood in the grass clutching the now half-gone bottle of whiskey under his arm. " *Jesus* , Rich!" he grunted, standing up and swinging the window open quickly, pulling Richie into the bedroom.

Richie toppled over and stumbled as he was pulled in. " whoew , whoew , Staniel, chill—god why is your bedroom *moving* ?" he grabbed at his head, swaying and fumbling as he stood. He felt as if he were on a carnival ride.

Stan blinked, taking in Richie's demeanor. Disheveled clothes, messy – or more messy than usual – hair, bloodshot red eyes, can't seem to stand still without toppling over....and whiskey clutched tight in his arm. "Rich.....Richie, are you *drunk*?"

"*and* high as balls." he grinned as if being drunk and high made him the coolest person on earth.

He thought a moment about this entire thing. Richie had just been subjected to hours of reliving and revisiting his traumatic experience along with having to sit in a room with his rapist and hear *him* talk about those events as well . Even the most sound of mind people would resort to drinking their pain away. But Stan had to remember, he couldn't treat Richie differently. He was still Richie and he was still—upchucking onto his bed sheets. "oh *goddammit* , Rich!"

Stan lunged toward the other, grabbing his shoulders and pulling him back. It was too late, his sheets were soiled. "ah, dammit—come on, let's clean you up." Stan pulled Richie out the door and into the hall bathroom all while Richie mumbled, "oopsies" and " s'sorry man".

Thankfully Stan was also alone that night. His parents had dinner plans and, despite the circumstances, they didn't even think to

reschedule in order to be there for their child. Go figure. But, it was actually in his favor, since he didn't want them involved with whatever was happening here. They'd just make everything worse.

Stan only noticed the bleeding and glass shards covered legs when they entered the dimly lit bathroom. He grimaced, moving Richie to sit on the side of the tub. "dude, what thefuck did you do?"

"heheh ... broke a bottle, passed out and cut my legs?" he shrugged. The pain was numb due to alcohol. He felt nothing.

Stanley reached up and yanked the bottle of booze from Richie's hands as the other started to drink it. "no, nope, no more alcohol. Jesus, Rich, you're gonna become an alcoholic." he rolled his eyes and knelt down, pulling up Richie's pant legs and started to remove the glass.

"yeah? So what'ef I do?" he shrugged nonchalantly. "don' really care . I like booze. It....makes me forget....an' I don't feel pain anymore."

Stan frowned. He didn't have a comment on that. He just continued to remove the small shards of glass from Richie's legs and washed off the cuts. "wellat least don't cut yourself next time." he sighed and stood back up. Richie sat silently on the edge of the tub, staring down at his legs. Stan wanted to shake the hell out of him. He wanted to scream at him that he's not making anything any better by drinking his problems away. Instead of any of that, he reached a hand down to help him up. "come on, we need to sober you up."

Richie groaned but grabbed his hand anyway, allowing the other to lead him out of the bathroom and into the kitchen.

"Richie Tozier, drink your water!"

"Stanley Uris, get off my *dick!* " Richie was flopped over at Stan's dining room table, head laying on his arm on the table. There was a barely drank glass of water in front of him that he glared at before pushing away. "I don't wanna water. Why can't you jus '.... lemme be happy."

Stanley had sat Richie down at the table with a glass of water to help sober him up while he worked on stripping his bed and washing his now soiled sheets. As he came back from the laundry room, Richie was sat with his head on the table and water barely touched. It was like trying to get a child to eat his vegetables .

Stanley frowned. Just let me be happy. Did alcohol make him happy? Did being drunk make him happy? Was that really the only thing that made him happy? “.....what about Eddie?”

Richie raised a brow, looking up to Stan.

“Eddie makes you happy, right? Why don’t you just focus on *him* and leave the booze alone, huh? It’s better for you in the long run.” Stan turned to go back into the laundry room. “and drink your *god damned* water, Tozier.”

Richie flinched as the laundry room door shut. Not hard, but not soft either. He could tell Stan wasn’t happy with him. Why would he be? Richie was a disappointment all around. Stan should be in bed, getting his beauty sleep before school, but no, Richie didn’t want to be alone so he decided to be selfish and burden his friend with his drunken presence. He pulled the glass of water toward him, circling his finger over the rim.

Eddie *did* make him happy. Way more than drinking did. He couldn’t be with Eddie all the time, but thinking about him might help just as much. He sat back and downed the water before getting up and stumbling to the sink to get more.

Stan called Richie’s parents not long after cleaning his bedsheets and informed them of where he was and that he was okay. He had a feeling Richie had left them with a huge mess, and he was right. He didn’t want them to see the shattered glass, blood, and empty bottles and that Richie wasn’t home and panic. Even though Richie said, “fuck ‘ em ,” Stan wasn’t going to just let them worry.

Maggie was indeed worried. She asked if he had really drunk five bottles of alcohol and smoked an entire pack of cigarettes. Stan

looked shocked over toward Richie who was currently passed out on his couch, hugging a throw pillow for dear life. *Five bottles* and *an entire pack*. Or, rather, a pack and a half and a bottle and a half. He sighed deeply. “....a little bit more than that, yes.”

“ wh -what do you meanmore than that?” Maggie spoke low and cautious on the other end.

“when he got here, he had a half bottle in his hand and a half pack in his pocket.”

“oh, dear God, my baby!” she started to cry. Stan didn’t really know what to say so he kept quiet and let her cry. She just didn’t know what to do for him. Learning everything that happened that day, how brutally her child’s innocence was ripped away from him, what he had done to him... she felt like the worst mother in the world to admit she was eager to go to her meeting to get away from it all. She never once thought about what *he* was going through after the trial. She never thought reliving his trauma would bring him to this.

“ I’m I’m sorry, Stanley, I shouldn’t be worrying you with all this. Just....just make sure hegets rest and gets to school on time.....please.”

Stanley nodded as if she would be able to see it. “...yeah. yeah, I can do that.” Stan sighed as he hung up, leaning on his bedroom wall with his arms crossed. Hopefully, Richie would be sobered up enough to get through the school day.

“ ooohhhh , Jesus , my fuckin head.” Richie groaned deep, hand on his forehead as he slumped over at his locker. It was his first day back to school since the incident, and he had a bad hangover. He could barely remember the night before. All he knew was he woke up in Stan’s bed, in Stan’s clothes, cuts all over his legs and completely feeling like shit. “...we didn’t fuck, did we?” Richie was half-joking half scared as hell. The slight anxiety at the possibility they might have had sex was real and present despite knowing Stan was *not* into him whatsoever.

To this question, Stan answered with a disgusted look. “Jesus, dude, *no !*” he shook his head making a disgusted sound as he closed his locker and started walking.

Oh thank god , Richie thought as he followed Stan. “what, you wouldn’t fuck me, Urine?” Richie felt the need to cover up his legit fear with a joke.

“not in your wildest dreams, Trashmouth.” Stan rolled his eyes. Given Richie’s situation, he felt it odd that Richie would joke about that, but he was also not an idiot and could see it in Richie’s eyes that he was actually scared of the possibility. But Stan would never even think about that. Stan didn’t think of Richie as any more than just a friend. Stan could not even think about being intimate with anyone but--

“Big Bill!” Richie exclaimed, high fiving Bill as they made it up close to the other.

“oh h-hey Rich, you, uh how....how are you feeling?” Bill wouldn’t admit that he had no idea how to approach Richie after yesterday. He didn’t have the same inner monologue Stan did about not treating him any different than they used to. Neither did any of his school mates either. They all looked at him funny, sad, in disgust, creeped out, just all of the emotions you can possibly look at someone with. And the whispering. He knew they were whispering about him.

“ I’mokay. Got a *bitchin* hangover, man.” they started to walk down the hall.

“..h-hangover?”

Stan sighed. “Richie showed up to my house last night piss drunk. *Apparently*, he drank *five bottles of alcohol*.” Richie just shrugged.

“ *f-five?* Shit, R-Richie, is that even p-p-possible without getting a-alcohol poisoning?”

“I dunno, I mean, I guess it is?” Richie didn’t *feel* like he had alcohol poisoning. In fact, he had no idea how that would even feel in the

first place.

At that point, Eddie had joined them in their walking. “guess about what?”

“that Richie might not have alcohol poisoning after drinking five bottles.” Stan reiterated, retrieving a glare from Richie who just got a slight shrug in return.

“what the fuck, *five bottles* !? Rich-- I mean holy *shit* , man, what were you thinking-!?”

Richie stopped in front of them, turning to face them and forcing them to stop as well. “I guess I *wasn't* thinking, right? I guess I was just *sick* of *thinking* all the time and decided to numb everything and *not think anymore*.I guess that's what happened....” he looked over his friends. They looked like they were sorry. Sorry for treating him normally and not cradling him and telling him it's going to be okay. Sorry for scolding him on his shitty judgment. Sorry that he was too weak to handle everything that happened at the trial. Too weak to stay home alone for only a few hours while his parents worked hard in order to pay their bills that only got higher because of him.

He didn't want them to be sorry for him. He wanted them to treat him like the old Richie.

The bell rang, saving his ass, but instead of saying bye he just booked it to his first period. Or booked it as fast as he could in a no running zone.

The others exchanged looks of worry before saying their own goodbyes and off they went.

School was the same. Nothing new, other than various looks Richie caught and whispers he only heard the tail end of. He did his best to avoid them at all cost.

He did eventually apologize to his friends and they eventually fell back into their old routine. Ben, having been absent for this during

the morning, was a bit confused but was told to not worry about it.

As they parted for the day, Eddie was greeted by Mrs. Trumen standing outside of her car and waving him down. She usually stayed after school to grade papers, so this was a bit odd. He said goodbye to his friends and walked over toward her. “hey, Mrs. Trumen . Are you...getting off early?”

She nodded. She still had a pleasant smile, although it was slightly sad along the edges. “there’s going to be a.... *surprise* for you when you get home, so I wanted to drive you myself. Get your bike in the back and let’s go.”

Eddie complied, though he was admittedly confused. What kind of surprise, and why did she look a little sad about it? He had so many questions he would not ask and just ponder over in his head the entire ride home.

There was a car in the driveway when they arrived home and Eddie grew even more confused by the second. As they got out of their car, so too did the owners of the other vehicle. It was the same social workers from the other day. His heart sank. He knew what this had to mean.

Even though he knew what was going on, he still asked, “what’s going on?” as they walked through the door, looking to and from the social workers and Mrs. Trumen.

The woman smiled at him with that fake ass smile she wore. “Edward, we have some good news. We finally got in touch with your aunt and uncle. They’ve agreed to take you in and they will be here to pick you up in a few days.”

Eddie’s face fell. This was *not* good news.

Notes for the Chapter:

oof, not too long before volume 1 is over with. I hope you all will stick around for volume 2! this book in the series may be ending, but the story is not

over. far from it, in fact!

I'd be inclined to say 2 more chapters, but that may change so I won't predict it just yet.

as always, please leave feedback in the comments! I love reading your input, even if it's short and simple! and as far as I know, you don't have to have an account to comment, so go for it! I reply back to everything and would love to start a conversation!

14. there's no time like the present

Summary for the Chapter:

Eddie tells his friends the bad news and realizes some feelings

Notes for the Chapter:

wheeeww I'm so glad I managed to get this done in time to post tonight. I had forgotten my laptop charger at my grandmothers and she had to overnight it yesterday, so all of this was scrambled to get done in one day, but it's here!

there is a trigger break in this chapter for mention of self-harm and suicidal thoughts.

also I do not know how Eddie's dad died. i am reading the book and idk if it's ever discussed in the book, but if it is, I'm not there yet, so i just kind of made some stuff up. also made up some family members.

His father's sister wasn't a big fan of him, sadly enough. Ever since his dad died, she started treating Eddie like a nuisance, and he never really knew why. Maybe she, for some reason, blamed him. Maybe she thought it was Eddie's fault he died. Or maybe it was because , as his mom would often say, he looked just like his dad. Maybe he reminded her of him way too much. Eddie couldn't even remember his dad. He died when he was really little, and honestly, he couldn't even remember how he died in the first place. Maybe it *was* his fault after all. He'd never know unless he asked his aunt, which he would never catch himself doing.

His Aunt lived close by in Derry for a while and every time she saw him or was tasked to babysit, she'd give him the stink eye, nag him about his clothes - "did your dumb ass mother forget to iron your shirt?" - she really loved complaining about his mom and calling her names, she must have blamed her too; and force him to do chores

around her house. Needless to say, Eddie was ecstatic when he heard she'd found herself a man and moved four hours away to be with him.

But now it was September of 1989, a little bit after his mom's death, and she would be on her way to sign the adoption papers and take him away in a day or so. This was honestly a nightmare. If she hated him so much, why would she even bother to take him in? Why wouldn't she let the system take care of him? He hadn't seen her since he was seven and she still hated him just as much back then, maybe even more. He didn't want to live with someone who more than likely was planning on treating him like a free housemaid. He would rather stay here, in Darry, with his friends, stay with his nice teacher who's treated him like a normal person with privacy that shouldn't be invaded, who can make his own decisions without getting an earful while still managing to be motherly and feed him delicious meals every night and help him with his homework.

He wanted to stay *here* . He liked it here. But that wasn't his decision to make, unfortunately. He was at the mercy of his aunt and uncle.

He found himself spacing out throughout the first half of the day. His friends noticed something was wrong, but he didn't know how to come out and say it. He wanted to tell them the bad news, but he didn't know how or when would be a good time.

It was lunchtime, and Eddie was full-on spacing, carrying his tray toward their table, sort of on auto-pilot as he did when he was knocked out of it as he ran directly into one of the school bullies, a transfer from New York named Eliot. He was scary, but definitely the lowest in the pack of bullies at this school, presumably because he was the newest. Belch and Vic, being the only surviving members of the Bowers gang and the rest of the bullies knowing that gang's reputation, was the highest on the food chain. All the same, Eliot scared the losers.

He yelled in terror as the sudden stop scared him back to reality. A lot of small things scared the hell out of him, he could never really do scary movies or haunted houses, even the baby ones. It was a wonder

he managed to fight a demon clown without even once shitting his pants.

Meatloaf, cottage cheese, and a slab of what looked like fruit cobbler were now smeared all over himself, the floor and sadly, the back of Eliot's hoodie. He thought he had to be dead as Eliot turned around. Out of pure instinct, he started to back away slowly, as if trying to get away from a wild animal. "s-s-sorry, man, I wasn't...paying attention--"

"you wanna *die*, punk? I don't give a shit about what happened to your mom *or* your friend's ass, I won't go easy on ya like the rest of these bitches." it was true that the bullying had lightened up significantly since the incidents. It was nice, but also a bit odd. Good to know there was still someone willing to kick the shit out of them despite the circumstances.

"i -I-I-" was all he could manage to get out as he continued to back up. He couldn't stop stuttering, was this how Bill felt all the time? It was infuriatingly frustrating, to say the least.

Luckily, a saving grace appeared in the form of Belch and Vic, standing over the now looming bully with a death glare. "you wanna step away from the kid before I break ya nose, ' *punk* ' ?" Belch mocked Eliot's use of the word 'punk' as he threatened the kid, adding insult to injury. Eliot wouldn't show how frightened he was to be confronted by the alpha dogs in their bully Hierarchy as he turned to face the two.

"you protecting the queers now, huh?"

"that's right." Belch said nonchalantly as if glancing over the queer insult. It wasn't anything different than the stuff they had called them, though it hits different now that everyone knew what happened to Richie. Now everyone called them homophobic insults, either to their face or in what they think is private.

With an arm from Vic pulling around Eddie's shoulders, pulling protectively – and a bit uncomfortably - close, Belch continued. "the losers? They're our territory. You don't *fuck* with any of them, got it?" he poked his finger hard into Eliot's chest. "tell the rest of those

punks, too. We ain't jokin' either. We'll fuck anyone up who messes with the losers."

Just like in a pack of wolves, the alpha dogs call the shots. Territories are held at the highest regard, especially those of the Alphas. You don't cross the line without permission or your throat is ripped clean out by the jugular. Eliot knew his place, which is why he backed away. Not without a retort, though. "I'll let them know. Let them know how much of fuckin *pussies* you two have become," he growled, like an angry wolf and scurried away.

"you okay, kid?" Vic asked, arm still around Eddie's shoulders. It was fucking weird. He didn't think he'd ever get used to this. All the same, he was grateful . Saved him a beatdown.

"um.... yeah, yeah, I'm okay.... thanks." he politely scurried away from Vic's protective grasp and picked up his tray. The two offered to help clean him up, but he declined, tossed the remaining food away, and headed to the bathroom to get his shirt whipped off.

He found his way a bit later back to the table, sitting down in his usual spot between Richie and Stan. They had been talking about a movie that's coming out when Eddie sat with no tray and wet spots on his shirt. They stared at him before Richie broke the silence.

"dude, what happened? Where's your lunch?"

Eddie just shrugged. He didn't want to explain the entire situation. "ran into apole and spilled it." he came up with a decent lie, hoping this wouldn't come back to bite him later.

"well, that b-b-blows." Bill spoke, biting his lip before pushing his plate forward. "wellhere . I-I'm n-no-not gonna eat my c-co-cottage cheese, so have it."

"no-no, it's okay-"

"yeah, and I barely touched my meatloaf. Take the rest, dude."Richie chimed in, pushing his own tray forward.

“ I’m not into fruit cobbler,” Stan stated, joining in.

“for some reason, the lunch ladies always give me an extra milk. I think she thinks it’ll help me lose weight or something.” Ben grinned as the others laughed, placing his extra milk in front of Eddie.

“no- no, really, guys, it’sit’s okay, I don’t--”

“for fuck’s sake, Eddie, just take the damn handouts. You gotta eat, or else you’ll waste away to nothing.” Richie grinned, poking Eddie’s side playfully, making the smaller boy recoil and giggle as he was very ticklish pretty much everywhere and Richie knew this and took advantage of it at any possible time.

“ah, shit, stop— haha —ok, okay, fine! Just- ahhhaha —stop!” Richie stopped poking Eddie once the boy agreed to eat and the others piled their contributions onto Ben’s clean tray. Eddie didn’t really like eating after people, but he could eat around their bites. He was really hungry and meatloaf day was his favorite, after all.

He wanted to tell them at lunch, but again, he didn’t feel the timing was right. He didn’t feel *any* timing was right, honestly. How do you just come out and tell your best friends since preschool that you’ll be moving four hours away and forgetting they even exist in a matter of days? you just don’t do that at lunchtime, or during science class, or during the morning before school starts, or walking down the halls to your next class. You make a date out of it, you invite them to dinner, you stand up and make an announcement. That was how you did it. But that’s not how Eddie did it.

“...they got ahold of Aunt Darcy.” Eddie interrupted a rather In-depth conversation about their after school activities, now reducing the chatter to silence. For the three who had been with Eddie the longest, they were concerned. They hadn’t heard that name in so long, and it wasn’t a pleasant name to be thrown around. As for the other three, they were just as concerned, though a bit confused.

“who’s Aunt Darcy?” Beverly broke the silence.

“Eddie’s bullshit aunt who treated him like the ugly stepson after his dad died. Which was most of his life.” Richie scoffed , looking back to Eddie. “what did she say? I bet she told them they could deal with--”

“she’s coming to pick me up in a few days.” Eddie cut Richie off, not meaning to, but it just happened. He looked up to his friends who were now drawn to silence again. Richie looked more hurt than the rest as if the reality of what he was saying sunk in sooner than the others. Why did this look Richie gave him make his heart flutter in the worst of ways? “.... I’llbe leaving Derry in a few days...”

Eddie hated himself for how abrupt and unprompted that was. How he probably ruined his friends’ evening plans all because he had to blurt out that he would be moving away. As he came back home, house empty save for the cat who meowed and purred, rubbing against his legs as he stood in the doorway, taking off his shoes, he ran up to his room and locked himself inside, allowing himself to cry into his pillow.

Everything sucked the year of 1989. First, Bill’s brother goes missing, then they had to endure an entire summer’s worth of torment from Pennywise and risk their lives for a town that would never know what they did. Then, not even a week later, barely able to cope with what they just did, Richie is assaulted and his mom was killed. This all happened in one, long year. This was way more than any child should ever have to endure in their life, let alone a year. And now, after all this, he would be whisked away to another town hours away from his friends to live with two people who hated him. What did he do to deserve any of this?

He liked it here. He liked living here. He liked Mrs. Trumen and her kind smile. He even liked the cat who was currently meowing and scratching at his door, as if she knew he was under distress and in need of a hug. He decided to let her in, and she immediately crawled up on his bed with him and snuggled in his lap, purring loudly.

Eddie turned on his stereo and popped In the mixtape Richie made him for his birthday. He expected to hear Forever Young, which was the first on the list, since he always restarted to tape after listening to

it, though this time, fate had other ideas.

The first thing he heard was the 50's style voice. "*Eddie my love*".

Instead of turning it off or skipping like he always did when this song came on, he let it play. Hearing the song made his heart patter and his stomach turn. Even though it was established that this song was put in here for a joke, it still made him feel a certain way. It was so personal; it literally spoke his name. He wondered if it really *was* a joke, after all. Why would Richie go through so much trouble for a joke like this? And why, during his party, was he so nervously shaking as he handed him the box, and why was he so adamant that Eddie listen to it *alone* if this was just a joke? Wouldn't he want to see Eddie's reaction in real-time? Wouldn't he want to laugh with his friends about it? Eddie was the one who said it was a joke. Richie just agreed. Maybe Richie agreed out of pure embarrassment.

Either way, Eddie couldn't deny the way Richie made him feel any longer. It had been a battle with him for so long. Thinking about Richie confessing his love to him, through this song or not, made him feel like he was going to catch on fire with how hot his cheeks were. He could feel and hear his heartbeat 20 miles an hour through his chest. Richie made him happy. Richie made him smile, laugh, and most importantly, Richie made his heart flutter.

He loved Richie. He had to admit this to himself. He *loved* Richie, and whether or not Richie loved him back was meaningless right now. The fact of the matter is, he would move in a few days. He would never see Richie again and would never be able to tell him or know how Richie felt about him. Even if it lands on rejection, he needed to tell him. He had to know, he had to let it out. He wouldn't remember, anyway. At least, for now, he could have some closure.

About an hour had passed after Eddie came to the determination that he had to tell Richie how he felt. He didn't know that Mrs. Trumen was home already when he went downstairs and, with shaking hands and sweating pits, called Richie's house phone.

He cleared his throat as the other end picked up and Richie came over the line. "u-um hey, Rich . I-- I need to tell you something."

=====

As Richie stumbled through the door after school, he flopped his backpack down at the door, quickly threw off his shoes, and shoved his hands in his pockets as he headed for the stairs. His mom was in the Livingroom, and she stood when she heard him come in. “Richie, how was school? Do you want a snack--”

“I’m fine, I don’t want to talk about it,” Richie spoke quickly as he made his way up the stairs. He could hear his mother verbally sigh, but he didn’t stop. He just didn’t want to deal with anything right now. Besides, she was about to head out for groceries anyway. There was no point in accepting her offer. He’d only be holding her up, and it’s not like he could tell her what *really* bothered him.

~~~~~

(trigger break for talk of self-harm and suicidal thoughts)

Richie buried his head in his pillow and screamed. This entire year sucked. This entire *life* sucked. Why did he have to be like this? Why couldn’t he be normal, fall in love with a girl like a regular boy, why did it have to be Eddie and why did Eddie have to be leaving him? He already had enough shit to still get over. He still couldn’t look himself in the mirror when he brushed his teeth, he still couldn’t look at his stomach at all, showering was difficult and filled with bad thoughts, he even on several occasions looked at the razor on the shower ledge and thought about cutting. And he did. Once. It hurt like hell and he swore he’d never do it again, but it took his mind off of his current dark thoughts. It took his mind off of using those razor blades to slice into his throat and ending this miserable suffering. He’d never actually do that, but he had some harsh Intrusive thoughts that never wanted to go away.

~~~~~

He hadn’t really slept alone much these past few days, so he didn’t really know whether or not his night terrors had gotten worse, so that was a plus. That was the only plus.

Richie knew Eddie would move away without knowing how he felt.

Richie knew Eddie could never feel the same for him....could he? He remembered back to 1988 on Eddie's birthday when he gave him the confession tape. An elaborate plan to indirectly tell Eddie how he felt that backfired more than an old pickup truck. 'a joke' Eddie called it. And Richie went along with it because, well, if Eddie thought it was a joke and didn't consider the possibilities, there wasn't any way these feelings would be reciprocated.

Now it was only a matter of days before his first love would move away forever. He'd have no other opportunities for closure. He had to suck it up and tell him. He had to do it tonight, or he'd never do it. Worse comes to worse, Eddie will forget he even existed by next week, and Richie would know it was never meant to be in the first place.

But he had to do it. No matter what, he had to. He stood up confidently, making his way out the door and--

The phone rang. He'd have to answer it. This entire thing could cost him his confidence, but he had no other choice. His mom would be pissed if she missed an important call.

As he picked up the phone, he spoke, "hello?" and his heart froze as he heard Eddie on the other end of the line.

"u-um hey, R i ch. I-- I need to tell you something."

Notes for the Chapter:

oh boy, this might just be one of the biggest cliffhangers, haha. sorry. ^.^ im trying to let this shit last for a bit. at the current time, i have no idea how many chapters are left, but i would say no more than 3. i know ive been saying 3 for a while, but i keep coming up with stuff.

next chapter: a reddie confession, finally!! how will it go? stick around to find out!

15. i hope you don't mind that i put down into words

Summary for the Chapter:

~how wonderful life is while you're in the world~

in which Eddie and Richie finally confess to each other

Notes for the Chapter:

well heck, I'm sorry this took so long! I swear I did not think it took all that long, but its almost been a week? how? I also wasn't planning on this being so long, but here we are! hope you like it!

also! read endnotes for an announcement!

Eddie remembered the day he and Richie first met. It was winter, 1980. They were 5. or where they 4? It was preschool and Eddie wasn't allowed to play outside with the other kids because his mom didn't like him out in the snow. She was scared he'd get frostbite, a cold, pneumonia, the flu, ect , ect. He was sat in the classroom alone. It was normal, he had been used to it. It was only a few months after his first day of school, after all, so he had no friends to play with. He didn't much get the opportunity to make any with all his restrictions.

Richie was sent inside for 'time out' after throwing a snowball and getting the ice in Stan's eye. Richie and Stanley were the first to become friends of the four original losers. They were close and had been since even before preschool started. Bill was next, and Eddie was last.

Eddie and Richie met during Richie's 'time out' and Eddie's isolation from the horrors of snow. Richie had a crush from day one and Eddie just thought he was funny. At five, though, the harsh reality of what was 'acceptable' and what was 'abnormal' or 'wrong' wasn't even a speck of thought to them. Thus, after a few days of hanging out, Richie told Eddie he thought he was cute and Eddie reciprocated the

feeling. Richie then asked Eddie, “do you wanna be married?” and Eddie accepted, later receiving a blueberry flavored ring pop as a ring.

It was innocent, Eddie would constantly tell himself years down the line. They were just kids, naive and small and just doing what kids do; playing games and having fun. As *friends*. Sure, he actually did think Richie was cute and sure, he really did have a baby crush, but that happens, right? Those small baby crushes happen and go away and if Richie even remembered this moment in time, he’d laugh and be grossed out and make jokes about it. They were older now; wiser. They understood the world a lot more now. They knew those feelings weren’t ‘normal’.

Fast forward to the present day, 1989, they’re 14 and Eddie is sweating like an Olympic runner, hands clammy, heart racing, feeling sick as hell. Richie was waiting on the other end for Eddie to tell him whatever it was he had to tell him and Eddie was caught in his headlights, not able to move or speak, mouth opening and closing in an attempt to make words happen. He could just hang up. He could make a joke and leave it at that, or tell him he needed help on his homework, anything other than what he was trying so hard to say right now.

The line was silent for a long time, and Richie was getting a little confused and also concerned. Why was Eddie taking so long to speak? Why did he seem nervous? What in the world *happened*? “....Eds? Spaghetti man, Coco got your tongue or somethin’?” as if she knew her name was called, Coco meowed up toward Eddie. The cat was judging him for chickening out. He could tell. She headbutted him and nuzzled his leg as if to push him to speak up already.

Eddie cleared his throat and took a deep, shaking breath. He could do this. “Richie. Don't speak, okay? Please, just let me talk and....you can say your piece when I'm done.”

say his piece? “o....okay? Shoot, dude.”

“....do youremember when we first met? You said I was cute and....we gotpretend married?”

Of course Richie remembered that. He hated that he was so confident back then. Or was it just that he wasn't aware of how harsh the world actually was to people like him? He didn't say anything as prompted and just waited for Eddie to continue. He had no idea where this was going. In hindsight, he should have seen it coming from a mile away, but his mind didn't want to let him believe it could ever be true.

Eddie let out a soft chuckle and paused to think about what to say next. His face grew red as he realized he had no idea how to move forward with this. "we-well, I, um..." he cleared his throat, adjusting his shirt collar nervously. "i -- back then, I said I thought you were cute too. Remember that? Well, thatthat wasn't.....that wasn't just p-pretend. I.....really did think you werecute"

The line went deathly silent as Richie started to realize what he was trying to say. His face fell into shock and he started to breath heavy, heart racing. He wanted so badly to say something, but he forced his mouth shut. *Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god*— Richie's mind raced. "....I still do....Richie...." Eddie's soft voice came back over the receiver and Richie about fell down, his back leaning on the wall and freehand clenching his shirt on his chest. *Oh my goD OH MY FUCKING GOD*-- "e-eds. ..- " Richi spoke softly, almost inaudibly , on the verge of tears, his mouth turning up in a smile.

"goddammit, Richie, I said don't *speak* !" he sighed deeply, rubbing his temple. " I'm not *done* ." he took a moment to catch his thoughts. " I don't *just* think- think you're cute, I think I-- I mean, that-that is, I *know* I--"

"Eddie...--"

"--Richie *shut up* -- I know I just, I mean I've liked you—like I mean actually *liked you* for a long long --"

"Eds, please--"

"--Richie I said *shit the fuck up* okay?-- I *like you*, but its....its more than just like, I mean its--"

"Eds--"

“-- **WHAT** , Richie ?! **What?!** I mean goddammit, can I not just speak for gods sake!--”

“dammit, Eddie, I fucking love you too, man.” Richie was in tears now, smile as wide as can be. Eddie stopped talking at this point. “I mean, Jesus , I've loved you for so damn long, oh my god, eds....”

“...R-Richie...?” now it was Eddie's turn to tear up as he realized what this all meant. The feelings were mutually reciprocated. Eddie had no idea what to do with this new information. “...what.... wh -what does....this mean?”

“it means whatever we want it to mean....” Richie smiled, leaning his head on the wall.

“what what do *you* want it to mean....? ” Eddie knew what *he* wanted it to meanbut he wanted to hear it from Richie.

Richie was silent for a moment before his face fell in a loving gaze toward the receiver and his voice was smooth as butter. “ I want it to mean I get to call you *my* little Eddie Spaghetti.”

Eddie smiled and his face turned red. He liked that voice. It wasn't one he's ever heard coming from Richie, but it was nice. And it was just for him. “ I -I'd like that too....”

The two silently held the phones to their ears, as if enjoying the company of each other through the phone lines. Richie spoke up soon after. “ I m coming over. I'll be there in 10.”

“o-oh, I-” he blushed a bit, looking around as if to make sure no one was there. Just the cat, still at his feet. “okay. I'll see you then.”

“ I love you, my sweet little spaghetti man.~ ” Richie spoke in that same smooth voice and Eddie's face lit up even more.

“ I -I loveyou too, Richie...” Eddie hung up and he leaned on the wall, sliding down until he sat on the ground, gripping the phone to his chest. “oh my god....” a wave of realization washed over him and he smiled wide. He had a boyfriend? Richie was his boyfriend. *Richie Tozier* was his *boyfriend*.

Coco meowed, crawling into his lap and he smiled sweetly at her and petted her soft fur. “thank you for encouraging me, Coco.... you’re my sole support team...” he held the cat close and snuggled her as she purred and nuzzled into his chest.

= = = = =

Cathy was home. Cathy had been home for a while, in her study. She figured Eddie would be out with his friends, but once she heard his voice from the Livingroom , she realized that wasn’t the case and came out to greet him and ask if he wanted something to eat or needed help with homework. She stopped in the hall as she overheard a conversation and she froze. She didn’t like to be nosey. She didn’t like to pry into others’ business, but the way Eddie spoke over the phone....

“ I -- back then, I said I thought you were cute too. Remember that? Well, thatthat wasn’t.....that wasn’t just p-pretend. I.....really did think you werecute”

He thought someone was cute? Back then? Back *when*? And who was he talking to? Was it maybe Beverly? Or was it--

“....I still do....Richie....”

Richie? Eddie thought Richie was cute. Eddie was confessing his feelings for Richie. It all made sense, thinking about it. But Eddie and Richie were both boys, and she feared for Eddie for what could happen next. Which is why she stayed to pry even further.

She listened to Eddie stammer, trying to come up with the words to say. She listened to Eddie argue with Richie about not interrupting, making her fears heightened. And then she heard Eddie ask what this meant. And then she heard Eddie say he’d ‘like that, too’ and ‘I’ll see you then’. And then she heard him say ‘ I love you too’. She smiled and instinctively sighed in relief. But then realization hit her. Eddie and Richie must be in a relationship now. They’d have to hide it. They’d have to repress their feelings and hopes that no one would find out. And after Eddie leaves, they’d have to live apart and not only maintain a long-distance relationship but have to maintain it in secret. She grew sadder and sadder and she came to these

conclusions.

“thank you for encouraging me, Coco.... you’re my sole support team...”

She left the room back to her study to finish grading papers.

=====

Richie hung up, although he didn’t want to, he wanted to stay on that line forever. But hanging up meant being able to see Eddie sooner and hold him for the first time as a couple. A fucking *couple* . He couldn’t believe it, it felt like he was dreaming. If he was, he never wanted to wake up. This was all just too perfect, and he momentarily forgot about anything else that had happened that month. Or even that entire year. “holy *shit* , I’m dating Eddie....” Richie mumbled, arms wrapped around his middle, face contorted in a silly grin. He immediately pushed himself from the wall and ran upstairs to pack a bag. He was determined to stay the night at Eddie’s. He had to know how it felt to hold onto Eddie all night as more than just friends.

Richie left a note on the counter for his mom, letting her know he was staying at Eddie’s for the weekend and rode his bike to Eddie’s despite living only a few houses away. He wanted to, at some point, show him the R+E, and maybe they could carve something special for themselves. Although he didn’t ever want to go anywhere near that bridge alone again, he was sure he’d be alright if he was with someone. Especially if that someone was Eddie.

Richie ran up to the front door of Mrs. Trumen’s home and straightened out his t-shirt and messed with his hair. He breathed in and out deeply before giving the door three loud knocks and waiting patiently.

He didn’t have to wait too long. Eddie was at the door within a few moments, and suddenly, like looking at a new person, Richie saw everything he loved about Eddie glowing bright and blinding him.

The way his fringe curled in little ringlets. His hair was always so

straight and cleanly parted, which was cute as hell, though seemingly overnight, his hair started to curl and suddenly Richie had fallen in love all over again. Richie remembered the day they fought it. After they left the sewers, Eddie was covered in grime and vomit and to him, he looked disgusting but, despite the nasty shit all over him, His curls never seemed to falter, and to Richie, He was still cute as hell.

His shortness and slight chub. Richie himself was tall and lanky and just got more and more tall and lanky as puberty continued to plague him. Eddie, on the other hand, was a small teddy bear . Sure, he'd always make fun of Eddie's mom for being overweight, but she was obese and unhealthily so. Eddie wasn't. He just had a little extra insulation in his tummy, and goddammit was that the cutest thing.

His little short shorts. This could honestly go from cute to hot depending on what shorts he wore. Eddie had shorts ranging from slightly above the knee and cute to oh my god what are you doing to me, Eddie, I shouldn't be feeling this way. He had caught himself many times that summer staring at Eddie's ass. Far too many times. He's going to miss those shorts when winter comes.

His freckles. Both Eddie and Richie had been 'blessed' with freckles. The freckles on himself? He hated them. His skin was so pale and the freckles were so dark, they stood out way too much and he had too many of them. Eddie, on the other hand, had just enough and his skin tone was darker than Richie's and the freckles were only a few shades darker than that so it was honestly perfect. Some lined his cheeks, but they spanned all over his body in small patches. he wanted to, someday , be able to count all of them.

He was staring, mouth gaped slightly, and Eddie cocked his head to the side. "...Rich?" before Eddie could say anymore, Richie grabbed him and pulled him into a warm, loving, longing embrace, arms wrapped around Eddie's middle and gripping onto the back of his shirt. He pressed their bodies flesh together and buried his head into Eddie's neck.

Eddie was taken by surprise with the hug but soon brought his arms around Richie, as well. He pulled his arms around Richie's neck, smiling warmly as he held on tight, enjoying how new this hug was compared to their 'just friend' hugs. It was more than a hug. It was a

far too overdue embrace.

They stood on the porch for what felt like an eternity, holding each other close, neither one making a move to let go and neither one speaking. They just wanted to stay in each other's arms like this forever. But Eddie knew that, the longer they stood like this in the open, the more of a threat they had to someone noticing something was up. Word got around easily in a small town. It just took a nosy neighbor to see and gossip for Richie's father to find out. And who knows what he'd do then. Eddie didn't want to find out.

"..... Rich....we should....take this inside..."

Richie groaned but complied all the same. He didn't want to let go of Eddie, but he knew the risks in a small town like this. They parted and stepped into the house.

The two of them sat on the couch, Richie's arms firmly around Eddie's middle and face planted into his soft curls and Eddie with his head snuggling into Richie's chest. There was a familiarity to this, as they'd sleep together in similar positions, but at the same time, it was new and a little exciting. They didn't even have to talk or turn on the tv, or anything. Just being in each other's presence and arms were enough. They were still very unaware of Mrs. Trumen being home, despite the car in the driveway. They really weren't paying much attention to any of their surroundings. Richie was lucky he hadn't been hit by a car on the way.

A few moments passed after that and Eddie went to speak up, though was silenced when they heard footsteps down the hall and instinctively pushed away from each other in a panic, the two now on either side of the couch to each other, faces red with embarrassment.

Cathy came around the corner with her large smile. "I knew I heard commotion in here! It's nice to see you, Richard, will you be staying with us for dinner?"

Richie coughed, clearing his throat and instinctively reaching up to adjust his glasses, only to find he didn't have any. Right, he had contacts now. That was embarrassing. "ah-- wellyes ? If that's...okay? I, um, actuallywanted to see if I could spend the

night as well, Mrs. Trumen . Given that, umEds will be leaving soon?" he shrugged a bit. It was last minute, but he was hoping she'd have some sympathy for them.

Cathy eyed the two boys. The way they sat, so far from each other. The way they both seemed embarrassed for whatever reason. There was something going on with them, and she could tell.

She nodded after a second, realizing she was taking a bit too long. "of course you can, sweetheart! As long as it's okay with your mother."

Richie shrugged. "she'll be fine, I left her a note. But I can...call her later, just in case." anything so he could stay.

Eddie looked to and from Richie and Cathy. He had to talk to Richie about their situation. He had to talk to him in private. "ah.....okay, thanks Mrs. Trumen - we'rewe're going to go up to my room and. ..hang out for a bit." he stood up. "come on, Rich, I....need help with my math homework."

Richie grinned and scoffed as he stood. " of course you do, Eds. Don't worry, the math wize will help!" they started to walk and Cathy watched them with a soft smile. She knew it wasn't homework. She'd only hope they'd be smart about anything they planned to do.

"okay. I'll let you know when dinner's ready," she called up to them as they boys made their way up the stairs.

Sighing as the door shut, she headed back to the kitchen.

"Alright, so let's see that math homework, dumbass--"

" Richie I don't need help with math homework." Eddie rolled his eyes, shutting the door and locking it. Richie looked behind him to Eddie, watching him as the other walked over to his bed and hopped on to sit. Richie shimmied off his backpack. "really? Then why'd you--"

"Rich, we need to talk...."

Richie sighed. Talk? Wasn't that a bad thing when it came to relationships? He sat down next to Eddie on the bed. "youbreaking up with me already?"

Eddie rolled his eyes, thinking this was a joke, then soon realized Richie was completely serious and quickly shook his head, taking Richie's hand. "no! No, of course not, Rich! I--...." he grunted, holding Richie's hand tight. "we just need to talk about.....this..." he blushed. "I guess we can establish wewe're dating now? Right?"

Richie grinned a bit, nodding. "heh....yeah, that's what I was getting at earlier."

"right...." Eddie nodded as well, biting his lip as he thought for a moment. ".....we have to make a promise, Rich promise promise that we will do whatever it takes to.....not forget about each other. When I move...." he frowned. He'd be leaving soon. Very soon. Eddie knew that it was only a matter of time before the two of them forgot. He couldn't let that happen, they just started dating, he needed to do everything to remember Richie. He started to tear up as he thought about this. He really didn't want to leave. He really *really* didn't want to fucking leave...

"hey, Eds...." Richie noticed Eddie's tears and brought his free hand up to the other's face, cupping his cheek and moving Eddie's head to face him. "look at me, Eddie.... I fucking *swear* to you...I will *not* forget about you. Even if I have to constantly remind myself of you, even if I have to start a fuckin *ritual* to remember who you are, I swear to *god* I will never forget about you, okay?" Richie found himself starting to tear up as well as he spoke.

Eddie's face contorted into a smile as more tears slid down his face. He nodded. "me too, Rich.... me too.... I fuckin *swear*." he grinned a bit, arms pulling around Richie's neck. "after all....we *are* married, right~?" he giggled a little and Richie blushed slightly, grinning as well.

"heheh. True... but you know, we.....never made it official back then." his face lit up even more. He was suggesting they'd kiss. Could he even handle that right now? He felt like he could. After all, Patrick only kissed him once, and as long as they stay away from tongue-

Richie did his best to shove that down. He didn't need to be thinking about that right now. It was just a kiss. An innocent small peck on the lips. He's kissed his mom like that as a kid, it wasn't anything too bad, but just the thought of his lips touching Eddie's even for a second? His heart was fluttering fast.

Oh, Eddie knew exactly what Richie was suggesting. He had thought the same thing. Can Richie handle a kiss right now? If it's just a peck, would it be bad? Eddie remembered Richie mentioning being forced to briefly make out with Patrick. As long as they didn't *make out*, right? Eddie, himself, was not even close to being ready for that, anyways. But he had to make sure. "...are you ...are you sure you can handle that?"

Richie bit his lip and looked down toward the bed between them. Yeah, he could. He definitely could. He nodded. "I'll be fine." and, with that, they leaned in, rather slow and shy at first before pushing their lips together into a soft kiss. Richie did feel a slight tinge of panic threaten to waft over him, but he was determined to be okay. He focused on how it felt. It was warm and Eddie's lips were so soft and moist, they were perfect. Especially compared to his, abused with chapped skin due to his habit of biting and chewing on his lips.

Eddie felt like his chest was going to explode. He felt adrenaline pumping as their lips met and he could feel every bump and break in Richie's lips, though that honestly didn't bother him at all. It felt so nice. It was so much different than kissing his mom on the lips. The biggest difference was how long this one was lasting. Neither of them wanted to pull away and they ended up pushing closer after a while, Eddie's head slightly turning to the side. Eventually, after what seemed like forever, Eddie slowly pulled his lips off of Richie's.

They stared at each other in silence before Richie spoke, mouth curling into a side smile. "heh.... damn..." that was all he could manage to say, but honestly that summed up both their feelings very well.

They spent the rest of the time waiting for dinner laying in bed, snuggling, barely even speaking, kissing every once in a while, they were getting much more used to that and rather addicted to each other's lips, and listening to CDs on Eddie's radio, humming and

occasionally singing along.

Elton John's Your Song came on the radio and Richie grinned. He started to sing along softly, fingers twirling in Eddie's curly hair. Richie wasn't a bad singer. He was rather good, actually. His voice was soft and loving. His voice was just for Eddie. It made him feel giddy and special.

~“ *It's a little bit funny*

This feeling inside

I'm not one of those who can easily hide

Don't have much money but boy if I did

I'd buy a big house where we both could live”~

“you know, I.....put this on your CD because....every time I hear it, I think of you. I thinkabout how, if we were older....I'd whisk you away from this shitty, backwards town and never look back. And we'd be happy together.... somewhere else. Somewhere wewouldn't have to hide as much.” he smiled a bit. It sounded cheesy, but....it was true.

“..... I would like that, Rich...” Eddie smiled. He didn't find it cheesy at all. He thought it was cute. He agreed completely. “maybe...we still could....one day....”

“....one day....”

Dinner was called a bit later. They had spaghetti and it was very good, Cathy was an awesome cook. Eddie rarely got homemade food living with his mom. She only cooked boxed or canned stuff, so the only times he'd ever experienced a real meal was when he'd stay at his friends' places. It was different here. She cooked every night. He knew when he moved, he wouldn't get this anymore. He'd have to savor it while it lasted.

The two boys couldn't make it back upstairs fast enough, and the way

they were glancing at each other during dinner while they thought she wasn't looking confirmed her suspicions. They were together.

As Cathy stood in the kitchen, getting the leftovers put away and the dishes done, she had a lot to think about. She and Eddie weren't all that different. They were both forced to hide something from the world.

She let out a deep sigh and walked to where her purse was hanging, taking out her wallet and pulling out a hidden photo. It was a high school yearbook photo of another girl, cut out of the book. She gave a slight smile to the picture as she felt emotion waft over her. The girl was Cindy, her childhood best friend and, unknown to anyone but them, the love of her life. Or, unknown to anyone else for a short while. After they graduated high school, they had been spotted, holding hands as they walked down the street and the next day, walking home from her late shift, Cindy was attacked and killed. The police couldn't find any correlation to the two events, but Cathy knew. She wasn't able to go far, but she did manage to getaway. Derry maybe not all that great, but it's at least a little better than where she was from. To her, anyways.

She wanted to get away from her own feelings, and she did for the most part, but now they were all coming back. She had to be there for Eddie and Richie. She could possibly be the only adult who knew how it felt and could help them through. She wanted them to have a safe space to be together, as well.

There was a lot she needed to do, but she knew she had to in order to give them, give Eddie, a good life.

Notes for the Chapter:

before I get to the announcement, I'd just like to say the events leading up to the confession and some events after come from my real-life experience. to the brief, I struggled a lot with my own feelings in high school. I found myself falling for one of my friends who happened to be a girl, and i didn't want to accept those feelings for a while. then came the time I was planning on moving away to go to an art-

related high school in another state. I was sat in my room, listening to music, when a song came on. as I listened to Nickelback's Far Away (yeah I know, but hear me out it was emotional) I realized I really did love her and i had to tell her how I felt before I moved. difference is, I DMed her on a social media site instead of calling her. she came over the next day after we both confessed, and we held each other on the front porch for a long, long time, much like Eddie and Richie do in this chapter. anyway, I wanted to mention that.

now onto the announcement!

so, as you can see, we are about 2400 hits away from 10000! an amazing milestone and I am planning on doing another cute past self reddie one-shot to celebrate! this one will be about how Eddie and Richie first met, in a lot more detail than what was briefed here. so let's get this crap to 10000! note that even if the milestone isn't hit before this volume ends, i will still be watching its hit count and posting the one-shot after 10000.

anyway, please leave me feedback in the comments on how you liked the chapter! any and all feedback is welcome, even critical feedback! I reply back to everything, so let's get to chatting!